



Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
February 20 - 27, 2014

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Aboriginal Arts & Culture

RBC gives Indigenous Arts at the Banff Centre significant five-year funding boost

[Stephan Bonfield](#)

Published on: February 21, 2015 Last Updated: February 23, 2015 8:53 AM MST



BACKBONE, performer Thomas Fonua (a work-in-progress).

The Banff Centre made a welcome announcement last week, revealing the unprecedented news that RBC will make a sizeably generous \$1.075 million funding commitment to indigenous arts programs there over the next five years.

The announcement is only the latest co-operative effort between RBC and The Banff Centre designed to improve access to The Banff Centre's impressive array of arts programs for indigenous artists of all creative backgrounds. The grant falls squarely within RBC's dedication to sustaining their unstinting support for their RBC Emerging Artist Program at The Banff Centre.

"The RBC sponsorship is an unprecedented commitment to Indigenous arts funding at The Banff Centre," said Sandra Laronde, who has been director of Indigenous Arts programs at The Banff Centre for the past seven years.

"We are thrilled that there is such an outstanding recognition that Indigenous Arts plays such a vital role. Our Indigenous Arts programming is specifically designed to offer a level of cultural and artistic programming that is simply not offered elsewhere in Canada."

RBC's latest funding initiative will have wide-ranging impact upon the entire suite of Banff Centre programs across 13 artistic disciplines. The money will help to further the careers of indigenous writers, musicians and composers, dancers and choreographers, and visual and new media artists.

The funding will also help to maintain a consistent track record for guidance of its participants toward developing their talent via research, conception, and production of works with cultural integrity and artistic merit. And more new Indigenous artists will be able to attend The Banff Centre for their first stay as residents.

Moreover, the grant seems to coincide well with a strong public interest in Aboriginal culture and especially Indigenous artistic practices. “The programming and new artistic work coming out of The Banff Centre is unparalleled and so very exciting that even our sneak peeks and works-in-progress sell out. There is a big appetite for Indigenous Arts programming at The Banff Centre in this country,” confirmed Ms. Laronde.

The larger vision of the RBC grant is that it will help to inform and contribute to the Canadian artists’ cultural identity, while further strengthening the multi-faceted uniqueness of the indigenous artistic community. “It adds to the Canadian repertoire of what we understand to be our indigenous canon and where [that] is located within the Canadian canon of the arts. All this will roll out of RBC’s unprecedented funding,” Ms. Laronde added.

Several exciting, new artistic initiatives are planned. For example, one remarkable new interdisciplinary program that will come with a distinct musical focus involves the indigenous reclaiming of silent films through artistic reimagining of subjectivity.

A particularly relevant aspect of filmography involving indigenous peoples as the subjects of ethnographic study (i.e., the first groundbreaking film of its kind, *Nanook of the North* -1922) will be subverted in this program, effectively turning the tables as to the identity of both the subject of the film, and its filmmaker. In effect, this act of artistic subversion intends to symbolically open an era of silence through live performance, music and storytelling. Proposed performance dates are set for this fall on October 9th and 10th.

Other initiatives will commission new works from indigenous artists as part of a self-directed residency. For example, the indigenous dance residency, which is already growing will receive some partial funding to be directed to furthering its already remarkably unique model in the world that marries arts and leadership in real ways that are exciting for participants.

“Creating a model that teaches what it is about to be young leaders, and what those responsibilities are is central to the Indigenous Dance Residency model. It’s a long list for our young artists, and it is important for what it can become in terms of teaching hands-on leadership. It could even become a new model for other departments at the Banff Centre to potentially emulate,” Ms. Laronde elaborated.

The Indigenous Dance Residency will run for its seventh straight year under the umbrella funding provided by RBC, this time from August 3 — 29 with performance dates August 28th and 29th. This is the only program in North America, widely acclaimed throughout

the world, that is led by Indigenous faculty who work closely with Indigenous artists of the highest national and international calibre.

The artistic aims and standards will very likely remain consistently high as well, as the residency continues to deepen its investigations of contemporary Indigenous dance practices with the goal of furthering and entrenching indigenous culture. The four-week residency is intensive, consisting of classes in daily technique, improvisation, choreographic exploration, and the creation of new choreographic work that becomes part of the Summer Arts Festival's traditional closing performances the final week of August.

Direct Link: <http://calgaryherald.com/entertainment/local-arts/rbc-gives-indigenous-arts-at-the-banff-centre-significant-five-year-funding-boost>

Medical student turned comedian finds medicine in laughter

By Maggie Moose, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 21, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Feb 23, 2015 11:42 AM ET



Sage Daniels is from Long Plains First Nation. "Laughter is a really big part of our community and culture," he said. "When I was a kid, there was an elder that told me 'If you tell a story and ... if people don't laugh, you've failed as a story teller.'" (Chris Hearn)

When Sage Daniels was 17, he tackled his first standup at a local comedy show. That night, he was booed off stage.

"I cried my eyes out when I went home that night, because it was a dream I had and people laughed at it in the wrong way," he recalled.

Being the honour roll student he was, Daniels had a few other options. His teachers encouraged him to pursue medicine, and that's what he decided to do.

But the goal of becoming a doctor didn't quite go as planned. First of all, he discovered he didn't really like blood. Then, in his third year of pre-med, he lost a number of family and friends within the span of a few months.

He fell into a deep depression. And when he quit laughing, he lost something else.

"Laughter is a really big part of our community and culture," said Daniels, who is from Long Plains First Nation and lives in Winnipeg.

"When I was a kid, there was an elder that told me, 'If you tell a story and ... if people don't laugh, you've failed as a storyteller.'

"So being a sarcastic kid, being aboriginal, having my culture have a very strong basis in laughter, when I became sad and depressed I was disconnected from a very large part of myself."

Daniels left pre-med studies.

"On top of losing my goal, my dream job, I lost ... my apartment and I lost my friends," he said. "So that piles up and I lost myself for a very long time."

But two years ago, Daniels braved the stage once again, on a whim. He had rewritten and revised the same jokes he had told at his first comedy show.

"People laughed at me and I was laughing and we were laughing together," he said.

"It was a spiritual Zen that just [was] awoken in me and I found myself again. I found the piece of me that was missing for a long time."

Daniels said there are seven sacred healings in Native American culture, and one of those is laughter.

"I would have been a different person if I was a doctor. I'd have been a lot more cynical. I probably wouldn't smile as much as I do right now."

Now, laughter is Sage Daniels's new medicine.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/medical-student-turned-comedian-finds-medicine-in-laughter-1.2964940>

Inuit Heritage Trust plans whale bone house for Iqaluit

Building the house, framed by whale bone and covered by sealskins, would honour Thule culture

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 24, 2015 6:51 AM CT Last Updated: Feb 24, 2015 8:18 AM CT



Crystal Two is one of the sites being considered for the Thule whale bone house in Iqaluit. (Vince Robinet/CBC)

The Inuit Heritage Trust is hoping to build a house, framed with whale bones and covered by sealskins, in Iqaluit to honour the Thule culture.

Today's Inuit are direct descendants of the Thule and the planned replica will be similar to one restored by researchers near Resolute Bay.

The tradition of using whale bones to build homes dates back more than a thousand years.

Torsten Diesel with the Inuit Heritage Trust says the organization hopes Iqalummiut will come together to work on the project.

"In terms of labour we would like to encourage Iqalummiut, once it's time to build the house, to come out and build the house together," he says.



This Thule whale bone house was restored by researchers near Resolute Bay. There are plans to create a similar structure to honour the Thule in Iqaluit. (Inuit Heritage Trust)

"Maybe have some elders there so we can tell the stories and share the knowledge of Inuit past with local residents."

The Inuit Heritage Trust is now considering where to build the house; among the options is the Crystal Two site by the Sylvia Grinnell River.

Diesel says the project does not have funding at the moment but he expects it could cost anywhere from \$80,000 to \$240,000. He hopes to build the replica by fall 2016.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/inuit-heritage-trust-plans-whale-bone-house-for-igaluit-1.2968596>

Buffalo revive Cree culture in more ways than one

By D.C. Fraser, Leader-Post February 25, 2015



Author Judith Silverthorne reads her book *Honouring the Buffalo* to students from Seven Stones Community School in Regina on Tuesday. The book is published in both English and Cree.

The story of the bison is filled with lessons. Turns out, the writing of that story came with its share of lessons too.

In a gym at Seven Stones Community School on Tuesday, a story written in Cree and English was shared with students of the school.

Honouring the Buffalo was written by Judith Silverthorne, who created the story based on the oral tale of the same name told by Ray Lavallee, a First Nations elder.

It tells the legend of the buffalo, and the many ways it lent itself to the survival of the Plains Cree.

"I felt very awestruck that I was being introduced and allowed to share another culture," said Silverthorne.

Silverthorne has written several books and has lived most of her life in Saskatchewan, but writing this book was a learning experience for her. She said she had no idea the detail to which the buffalo was used.

"They would not have existed without the buffalo, and that was just mind-boggling to me," she said.

Luckily for her, she had Lavallee, a wisdom keeper and medicine man from Piapot First Nation, to lean on as a resource.

"I can ask him anything about the culture," said Silverthorne.

She isn't the only one who learned a thing or two while the book was being created.

Mike Keepness, who illustrated the book, said he is still learning about his culture.

"It was a real learning curve for me," he said. "It's a journey for me."

Keepness was chosen by Silverthorne to illustrate the book after he was recommended to her.

He has had a passion for painting bison for a long time, and it's a subject in many of the paintings he sells.

"Bison is still feeding this guy, you know?" he said.

As Silverthorne read the book - with the help of a student who read a part in Cree - students from the northeast elementary school listened closely.

After, several small hands flew into the air as a question-and-answer session was opened up. Silverthorne and Keepness fielded questions - "How do you write a book?" "Did you tell the legend the exact way Elder Ray told it to you?" - while Lavallee looked on.

He looked pleased as he watched the lesson take place. He said the book is helping to bring back his culture.

"I'm lucky. I know where I come from. There (are) lots of young people who don't really know who they are. They're lost. They just know their colour. I know who I am," he said.

Direct Link:

<http://www.leaderpost.com/news/Bufalo+revive+Cree+culture+more+ways+than/10840756/story.html>

Wab Kinew brings First Nations equality plea to students

Lakefield College School visit sees Canadian broadcaster, university administrator, author and musician provide an overview of policies and approaches that have failed and why that hurts all Canadians



Wab Kinew at Lakefield College School - Feb. 26, 2015

By [Paul Rellinger](#)

LAKEFIELD — The message is simple but key to understanding the history and continuing existence of an uneven playing field in Canada.

Canadian broadcaster, university administrator, author and musician Wab Kinew spoke Thursday morning (Feb. 26) to a group of Grade 9 and 10 students at Lakefield College School. When he was done, all had a clearer understanding of how Aboriginal people in Canada have struggled to secure equal footing with those of non-native Canadians and how much that struggle continues to this day.

“I’m a great patriot but I recognize that this country can do better,” said Mr. Kinew, born in Onigaming First Nation in northwestern Ontario.

“Indigenous people know firsthand the impact the inequalities in Canadian society. But that impact goes well behind them. Everyone in this room is poorer off because of the failed policies of the past. For example, it’s estimated the Canadian economy would grow by \$170 billion if the playing field is leveled.”

Mr. Kinew started his talk by asking the students if they think racism is a problem in Canada, the result being a fair number of hands held up. He then cited examples where First Nations people have deprived the same rights and benefits extended to non-Aboriginal Canadians. For instance, he noted schools on reserves receive \$4,000-per-student less funding than other schools.

More dramatically, he noted a recent tragedy in north Saskatchewan which saw two First Nations children killed in a house fire. When the fire chief, and mayor, of the neighbouring community received the 9-1-1 call for help, he failed to act — the reserve had an outstanding bill of \$3,400 owed.

To understand where things are today, Mr. Kinew provided what he termed “the Coles Notes version” of the history of Canadian government-First Nations relations forged and treaties signed since Confederation. While admitting things are better now — at one time, not that long ago, First Nations people couldn’t own property, couldn’t sell goods and couldn’t even leave the reserve without written permission — much work remains to be done.

“There are some very basic wrongs that need to be righted,” he said.

While acknowledging his admiration for Prime Minister Stephen Harper for his Parliament Hill apology for the residential schools debacle, he added “the government approach on the policy side of things isn’t good...consultation occurs in name only.

“Canada has been deeply deprived...our social and cultural life is poorer as long as true equality doesn’t exist.”

When his formal talk was done, the question-and-answer session saw Mr. Kinew elaborate more on the path his life has taken, including the importance to him of living the teachings of his people and ensuring his own children are introduced to them. As a bonus, in response to one student’s curiosity, he rapped — his 2009 debut CD *Live By The Drum* won an Aboriginal People’s Choice Music Award for Best Rap/Hip-Hop Recording.

Direct Link: <http://www.mykawartha.com/news-story/5450113-wab-kinew-brings-first-nations-equality-plea-to-students/>

Aboriginal Business & Finance

Shark Club eating into First Nations gaming profits, says chief

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 25, 2015 10:18 PM CT Last Updated: Feb 25, 2015 10:18 PM CT



St. Theresa Point Chief David McDougall says First Nations gaming groups had been in talks several years ago to build a casino in Winnipeg, but he said the idea was shot down by the provincial government. (CBC)

A Manitoba First Nation leader is calling foul on the Shark Club, accusing the companies behind the downtown Winnipeg sports bar and gaming centre of taking a bite out of gaming profits for aboriginal communities.

St. Theresa Point Chief David McDougall says First Nations gaming groups had been in talks several years ago to build a casino in Winnipeg, but he said the idea was shot down by the provincial government.

"Years ago we were saying we had an interest in the Radisson Hotel, and then we had gone forward with a resolution," McDougall said at the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs' annual general meeting Wednesday.

"I don't know how far it went, but I know we were shut down even before we got out of the starting gates ... saying the market in Winnipeg is saturated."

McDougall said it's not fair that the application to open the Shark Club, located across the street from the MTS Centre, was then given the green light.

"As soon as there was a proposal being done by whomever, True North or whatever, then they accommodated and they set up the Shark Club right in the facility where we wanted ours," he said.

The Shark Club officially opened in 2013.

Casino finances, transparency and revenue sharing formed part of Wednesday's agenda at the AMC's annual general assembly, which is being held at the South Beach Casino in the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation north of Winnipeg.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/shark-club-eating-into-first-nations-gaming-profits-says-chief-1.2972899>

Aboriginal Community Development

Alberta opens wide-ranging talks with northern aboriginals

By Bob Weber The Canadian Press
February 20, 2015 1:27 pm



Alberta Premier Jim Prentice.

EDMONTON – Alberta is hoping to smooth troubled relations with its northern First Nations by opening talks on everything from health and education to environmental issues and missing aboriginal women.

Premier Jim Prentice, who also serves as aboriginal affairs minister, had a “comprehensive” meeting with Treaty 8 chiefs on Thursday.

“It was a good meeting,” he said.

“The chiefs didn’t hold anything back from me in terms of what their feelings are and some of the frustrations that they feel.”

The parties are formalizing an agreement for negotiations on six issues that the chiefs raised, Prentice said. Talks are to cover education, health, environment and land use, child welfare, missing aboriginal women and consultation on resource development.

Cabinet ministers from appropriate departments are to take part in each set of talks, said Prentice. All the topics have been the subject of disputes and several court cases and judicial reviews have resulted.

Bands have told the government they don't want any part of its proposed plan to centralize and control how companies work with First Nations on development projects.

"I've heard from a couple of very passionate chiefs about their concerns about the way the consultation process is working – or isn't working," said Prentice.

Treaty 8 officials could not immediately be reached for comment.

The premier said he hopes to set up similar talks with bands covered by Treaties 6 and 7 in central and southern Alberta.

"I'll certainly have a meeting with each of the other treaty groups and see what their concerns are."

The government has also scheduled a meeting for March 13 with all the province's treaty chiefs to discuss aboriginal education.

Prentice has made resolving aboriginal concerns – which have become an international issue as Alberta tries to sell its energy resources abroad – a priority of his government. As well as serving as his own minister on the file, he has held repeated meetings with First Nations chiefs and has promised reform in several areas, including on resource consultation.

He said the meetings with Treaty 8 band are the beginning of that process.

"It is the beginning of a relationship," Prentice said. "Treaty 8 is the majority of the land mass of Alberta and the entirety of northern Alberta.

"These are important relationships."

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Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/1841488/alberta-opens-wide-ranging-talks-with-northern-aboriginals/>

Child advocate calls on First Nations, Ottawa to make fire safety a priority

The call came in response to the deaths of two children in a house fire on the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation

[The Canadian Press](#)

February 20, 2015

LOON LAKE, Sask. – Saskatchewan’s child advocate says too many children have died in fires on reserves and aboriginal and government leaders need to get their act together.

Bob Pringle says children have a right to be safe in their homes.

“The issues have to be addressed or there’ll be a next time and a next time and a next time,” Pringle said Friday. “Adults, figure it out — it’s not rocket science.”

Pringle was responding to the latest tragedy in the province: the deaths of two children in a house fire on the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation.

Two-year-old Harley Cheenanow and his 18-month-old sister, Haley, had been home with their grandmother when the fire started early Tuesday. The grandmother managed to get out of the house and, although the children’s father had arrived in time to carry them out, they didn’t survive.

RCMP were the only first responders that showed up to help.

The reserve has had a working fire truck for several years but has never used it. It isn’t properly equipped and no crew had ever been trained to use it.

The band had hired the volunteer fire department in a neighbouring village of Loon Lake, but was cut off services after the village said the band stopped paying its bills. The fire chief has said he got a call about the fire, but didn’t respond.

The decision has fuelled tension between the two communities and created debate in Ottawa about funding to reserves. Federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt has said Makwa Sahgaiehcan, like all other reserves, gets sufficient funding for fire services and it’s up to band officials to decide how the money is spent.

Pringle said the finger-pointing must stop. And he’s writing all sides a letter asking them to meet and work on solutions.

“We’ve kind of lost the focus on the children,” he said. “When we know there are systemic issues that continue to result in children dying, that says to me, ‘You know, do we really value children? Are their needs on the front burner?’”

Critics have pointed to poverty, outdated and overcrowded housing and a lack of fire prevention education as causes for fires on reserves.

Five children died in fires on Saskatchewan First Nations last year, Pringle said. Last month, a 10-year-old boy and his adult sister were unable to get out of a burning home on the English River First Nation.

Eric Sylvestre, chief of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council that represents Makwa Sahgaiehan and other First Nations in the area, has ordered an inventory of fire services on the reserves. He also met Thursday with an Aboriginal Affairs official and asked that more be done to ensure they have what they need.

It's time for action, Sylvestre said, not "to argue about funding and placing of blame."

The office of the province's fire commissioner said investigators are still trying to determine the cause of Tuesday's fire.

Kent Stewart, Saskatchewan's chief coroner, has said a decision will then be made about whether to hold an inquest into the deaths. He said no inquest has ever been held into a child's death in a fire on a Saskatchewan reserve.

Direct Link: <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/child-advocate-calls-on-first-nations-ottawa-to-make-fire-safety-a-priority/>

Potlotek First Nations water tank plugged with ice

About 40 households are affected, at intervals through the day, they're without water

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 19, 2015 7:19 PM AT Last Updated: Feb 19, 2015 7:19 PM AT



Noel Doucette, operator-in-training at the Potlotek water and wastewater office, has to wait for a thaw before he can get water flowing again (Norma Jean MacPhee/CBC)

The water tank that serves the First Nations community of Potlotek, near St. Peter's, Cape Breton, is draining fast.

The stem, or draw pipe, of the tank is plugged with ice.

Water can be drawn from the tank, but because of the blockage, it can't be replenished.

Operator-in-training of the Potlotek water and wastewater office, Noel Doucette, said the trouble started last week in a flash freeze.

"We weren't able to catch it and keep the water flowing," he said.

"It froze so fast one evening that we weren't able to shut the pumps off and let the water flow down slowly through the day and then turn them back on to keep the water flowing up and down to prevent it from freezing."

The stem of the water tower is 26 metres tall, from the ground to the bottom of the bowl of the water tank.

Doucette said it's frozen somewhere along the stem, but he doesn't know how far up.

"As a result we're not able to pump any water into the system, into the tower itself to store."



The Potlotek water tower froze last week during a flash freeze. (CBC)

About 40 households are affected. At intervals through the day, they're without water.

Doucette said people are using water at their usual rate, but the tank is not being replenished as usual.

He wants people to use less until the situation is resolved.

"Water production is limited because we cannot produce as much as they are using at the moment," he explained.

"Families should just learn to conserve a little more and it'll help us keep at least some supply of water to houses."

Doucette said there's not much he can do to melt the ice inside the steel pipe.

He just has to wait for nature to take a hand by providing some warmer temperatures.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/potlotek-first-nations-water-tank-plugged-with-ice-1.2963819>

Makwa Sahgaiehcan deadly fire: Unpaid bills of \$3,400 part of response dispute

Village of Loon Lake, Sask., says it warned First Nation about unpaid bills before fire that killed 2 toddlers

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 19, 2015 5:30 AM CT Last Updated: Feb 19, 2015 3:34 PM CT

A dispute over unpaid bills valued at nearly \$3,400 led to a decision not to send volunteer firefighters to a fatal house fire Tuesday on a northern Saskatchewan First Nation.

The Village of Loon Lake is generally responsible for emergency services in the area. It said it did not respond to the fire, which killed two Makwa Sahgaiehcan toddlers, because the First Nation owed the village \$3,380.89.

Laurie Lehoux has worked as the village administrator in Loon Lake since 2012. She said the issue of unpaid bills has endured for a year.

An agreement between the village and the First Nation was first struck in January 2013. It outlined costs for attending fires.

The contract agreement also stated that retainer fees were to be paid no later than 30 days after the time they were billed.

"Or else it would render this agreement void and null and all fire services would be revoked," Lehoux said.

However, Chief Richard Ben of Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation said he doesn't remember signing any contract.

"We've never even had a contract to begin with in the past," he said. "That's what I can't get my head around ... I'm actually going to go to the village office and see this contract. I was also going to go and make the payment for the amount owed. It had nothing to do with our finances. It was just to create better services for our First Nation."

Between March and May 2014, the Loon Lake fire department attended calls to the First Nation for brush and structure fires. By September, Lehoux said the village hadn't received its fees, despite calls and notes to the First Nation.

On Jan. 30, 2015, the fire department sent a letter to the First Nation saying it was over three months behind on payment. In that letter, the fire department said it would no longer respond to any fires until its account was paid.

"Any time that they were over their 30 days, they should've known that services may not have continued. Definitely with the January letter, they should have known that no one was going to show up to this last fire," Lehoux said.

Ben said the First Nation always pays the fire department after the call is finished.

"It was more or less they come, and we pay them and that was it," he said.

"I'm pissed off because we've always paid them," Ben said. "They can't say we haven't put thousands of dollars into that department. And they've always showed up at every incident."

Ben said people in his community are upset.

"Well, they're sad," he said. "They're mad. They're mad right now at the fire chief. You know, I told them not to blame anybody. We've got to move forward and those are our neighbours ... we have to work with them at the end of the day."

Lehoux hopes that after the community grieves its immeasurable loss, it can work with the federal government and the village to ensure this doesn't happen again.

"Hopefully when all that is over, the three governments can sit down and maybe make something that's better for everyone, I don't know. But here's hoping," she said.

The Village of Loon Lake has released a series of letters concerning fire services between the village and Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/makwa-sahgaiehcan-deadly-fire-unpaid-bills-of-3-400-part-of-response-dispute-1.2962751>

Cutting heating costs, developing new skills

Posted: 02/21/2015 4:17 AM | [Comments: 3](#)



Lyle McKay (left) and Clayton Sinclair, trained service technicians from the community, install a geothermal furnace into a older home.

The *Free Press* took a tour of geothermal projects on the Interlake First Nations of Fisher River and Peguis one bright but bitter windy day this week.

The two neighbouring First Nations are 220 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg on Highway 17. Both want to convert all their heating needs to geothermal.

For the last two years, they've quietly gone about the conversion through a Manitoba Hydro homeowner loan program and the help of an energy brokerage called Aki Energy.

"In about eight years, we'll be all caught up; all the older homes and the administration buildings will all be geothermal," said Mervin Murdock, manager of Fisher River Builders Ltd.

"We'll be just about off the grid," added Sam Murdock, Fisher River's director of operations.

Monthly heating bills for an 1,800-square-foot bungalow should come in at about \$200, including repayment for the Manitoba Hydro pay-as-you-save program.

And in the summer, the system can be used to bring in cool air.

"It's a great way not only to heat our homes and cool them in the summer, but also to allow better air flow in the homes," noted Peguis Chief Glenn Hudson.

A further innovation on Peguis is solar-panel installations, overseen by a Winnipeg industry leader, Dan Jung, the head of Northern Lights Solar Solutions.

"There's a big lineup for people who want to do this. There aren't many places where people sit around the coffee shop and talk about saving energy," he said.

Have Your Say

Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/Cutting-heating-costs-developing-new-skills-293171451.html>

First Nation fire safety hurt by lack of standards, chief says

No fire safety standards, inspections or reporting requirements on reserve, Stan Beardy says

By Jody Porter, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 23, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Feb 23, 2015 3:57 PM ET



The chief of Mishkeegogamang First Nation sought a coroner's inquest to expose inadequate funding for fire protection and housing after a fire in this house killed four people in February 2014. (Martine Laberge/Radio-Canada)

First Nations children living on reserve are likely to continue dying at a rate of 10 times greater than other Canadians until standards for fire safety are enacted, says the Assembly of First Nations Ontario regional chief.

The lack of a regulatory regime for fire services and inspections in First Nations means there are no minimum requirements, Stan Beardy said, so the federal government isn't held to account for its "inadequate" funding.

The deaths of two toddlers in a house fire on Makwa Sahgaiechcan First Nation in Saskatchewan last week is renewing calls for improved fire safety in First Nations communities. A funeral for the children is planned for Monday.



Assembly of First Nations Ontario Regional Chief Stan Beardy says the federal government benefits from the lack of minimum standards for fire protection in First Nations. (Cathy Alex/CBC)

"First Nations people — the parents, the grandparents — love their children like everybody else," Beardy said. "We have to continue to create this awareness that all life matters, including First Nations children."

Ottawa spends approximately \$26.3 million annually on fire protection services for more than 600 First Nations in Canada. That level of funding means no First Nation in Ontario has been able to purchase fire equipment since 2012, Beardy said.

"If there's no fire equipment on First Nations, if there's no reporting requirements for fire protection, if there's no fire inspections, how do you ensure you're meeting some standard to make sure there's safety?" he asked.

National chief seeks meeting

A First Nations fire protection strategy was developed in 2010 with the then-department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada committing to "collect and analyze data on fire protection services for on-reserve and comparable off-reserve communities."

CBC News asked the department — now Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development — for the results of that data collection and analysis. No one from the department has responded to that request.

The national chief of the Assembly of First Nations sent a letter to the minister of Aboriginal Affairs on Friday, asking for a meeting to talk about the "crisis" in fire safety.

Perry Bellegarde said he wants the federal government to lift its two per cent cap on First Nations funding so that "critical needs" such as housing and infrastructure can be met.

"Our people have suffered long enough," Bellegarde said in the letter.

Make-shift wood stoves

Fire hazards often peak during the winter months in isolated First Nations where most families rely on wood stoves to heat their homes, Beardy said.

Community leaders in Mishkeegogamang First Nation, 320 kilometres north of Thunder Bay, raised concerns about over-crowded and poorly constructed homes after a house fire in February 2014 killed four people, including two children.



Chantelle Skunk, a mother for four, said she was sleeping in the living room to keep a watchful eye on her wood-burning stove through the night after a fatal fire in Mishkeegogamang First Nation last winter. (Martine Laberge/Radio-Canada)

Most of Mishkeegogamang's homes are equipped with a wood-burning stove that looks like an oil barrel, hooked up to a chimney. There's a hole on top through which logs can be placed, and a hole at the bottom of the barrel for air intake.

The stove is usually located near the only door to the house, in a shared area such as a kitchen or living room, blocking a safe exit should the fire in the stove get out of control.

The dependence on wood stoves is a "fact of life" in communities with no other affordable heat source, Beardy said.

Funding solutions

The regional chief said there is a solution to solving the fire safety concerns and saving lives.

"We need to look at our own economic base, a viable economic base," Beardy said. "The only way to make that happen is to make sure we have a share of revenues coming from our lands and resources — resource-revenue sharing with the other levels of government.

"Then we would have greater responsibility and jurisdiction in terms of how we would run our services in our communities to make sure the safety and well-being of our people," he said.

Fund-raising campaign

Meanwhile, a woman from Ajax, Ont., near Toronto, has launched a fund-raising campaign for the family of the children killed in fire at Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation.

Jennifer Hartley said she read a news story about the fire and "cannot even imagine having to face this awful tragedy," so she started a gofundme campaign. She said any money raised will be given to the family to cover funeral costs.

On Sunday Hartley said she had raised more than \$3,000.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/first-nation-fire-safety-hurt-by-lack-of-standards-chief-says-1.2966701>

AFN's Bellegarde demanding "immediate" meeting with Valcourt

[National News](#) | 24 hours ago by [APTN National News](#) |



APTN National News

OTTAWA—Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde is demanding an "immediate meeting" with Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt in the wake of a deadly fire on a Saskatchewan First Nation that left two children dead.

Bellegarde sent a letter to Valcourt via fax on Friday saying he wanted to discuss lifting the two per cent cap placed on yearly funding for First Nations. Bellegarde said the cap

has left many First Nation communities struggling with limited resources which creates situations like the tragic one last Tuesday on the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation.

“The situation is at a crisis level and the reasons all point to the fact the government of Canada provides insufficient funds to First Nations to adequately provide their members a safe and healthy environment,” said Bellegarde. “The time is now to work together to address the challenges facing First Nations in terms of fire prevention and protection. Directly related to this is an open and honest discussion on lifting the 2 per cent cap on First Nations funding.”

Valcourt blamed Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation for not having the ability to fight the fire Tuesday that killed the two children. Facing questions from the NDP during question period Thursday, Valcourt said his department was giving First Nations adequate resources to deal with things like fire prevention and firefighting.

“This particular band has received consistent funding for fire protection services,” said Valcourt. “And the fact of the matter is that each band council is responsible for fire protection on the reserve... That First Nation, like others, received sufficient funds to deal with fire safety.”

Bellegarde said in his letter there was no point in blaming First Nations.

“It is not the time to play politics or blame First Nations that are trying to do what they can with inadequate resources,” said Bellegarde. “That will not change the outcome of these tragic events.”

The Chretien Liberals imposed the two per cent cap in the mid-1990s. Under the cap, overall funding for First Nations can't grow more than two per cent a year

In the letter, Bellegarde quotes former Aboriginal affairs deputy minister Scott Searson who told a Senate committee the cap was only supposed to be temporary. Bellegarde also mentioned an Aboriginal Affairs presentation that was tabled before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. Bellegarde said the departmental presentation shows the government is aware of the impact the two per cent cap has had on First Nations.

“I am asking for an immediate meeting with you to advance this work. Time is of the essence,” said Bellegarde, in the letter. “The longer we live and operate under these restrictive policies the more we are jeopardizing the health and safety of First Nations citizens.”

The Loon Lake volunteer fire department did not respond to the fire in Makwa Sahgaiehcan because the band was three months behind on its fire bill.

Local RCMP officers were the first responders on the scene and they saw the biological father bring his two-year-old boy and 18-month-old daughter out of the burning home.

Valcourt's office says the department gave Makwa Sahgaiehcan \$34,000 for fire prevention and services in the 2014-2015 fiscal year.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/02/22/afns-bellegarde-demanding-immediate-meeting-valcourt/>

City's first urban reserve opens Petro-Canada gas station

By: Alexandra Paul

Posted: 2:27 PM | [Comments: 24](#)



Ryan Moar (left) from Long Plain First Nation gets his identification card back after making a purchase during the grand opening of the new Petro-Canada gas station on Madison Street.

Long Plain First Nation celebrated the grand opening today of a new gas station and smoke shop on the first urban reserve within city limits.

First Nation chiefs and officials from the province, the city and federal government braved a stiff winter wind outside the new Madison Petro Canada Gas Station and Convenience Store along with about 100 people, including high school students from the First Nation bussed in for the event. Also on the reserve, and adjacent to the gas station, is Yellowquill College, which is already open.

"It's a beautiful morning for Long Plain First Nation," said Chief Dennis Meeches, who thanked chiefs and dignitaries by name for attending the event. A traditional prayer in Ojibway, an honour song and speeches preceded an official ribbon cutting.

The new gas station is located at 490 Madison Avenue one block west of Polo Park Shopping Centre and directly behind the big box mall with the Future Shop and Best Buy stores.

The gas station means aboriginal people with treaty status can buy items like tobacco products and gas exempt from provincial sales tax.

Customers who present treaty cards get a full rebate on provincial sales tax so that, for instance, a package of 25 cigarettes that would retail for \$15 elsewhere cost \$13.75.

It took years of negotiations to convert the property to reserve status with Ottawa. Long Plain also had to sign a municipal services agreement with the city where fees are paid in lieu of taxes and conclude a partnership for the pumps.

"We went hard on this because we knew it represented a source for economic sustainability for Long Plain... We have an aggressive urban reserve strategy because we believe that will give us a strong revenue stream," Meeches said.

Long Plain has two other gas stations, one on the First Nation located 90 kilometres west of Winnipeg and another in Portage la Prairie. Together the two locations brought in tobacco revenues of \$1.2 million last year, the chief said. Based on that, business in tobacco sales in Winnipeg should bring in half-a-million dollars a year.

"This is an exciting day for the community of Long Plain First Nation," said Norway House Chief Ron Evans. About five years ago, Evans worked with Long Plain as grand chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to negotiate the reserve's deal with the city for municipal services.

"The Madison Avenue location is of particular importance: It will attract a lot of business and establish a First Nations presence within city limits," Evans said.

Long Plain bought the site in 2005 from Manitoba Hydro. An office building on the property was refurbished for Yellowquill College.

St. James MLA Deanne Crothers (NDP) indicated the gas station is a chance for non-aboriginal people to see for themselves that a reserve business looks just like any other business.

"This is a fantastic opportunity to educate the public on the success of an urban reserve," Crothers told the crowd of about 100, including the high school students who were bused in from Long Plain.

Long Plain partnered up with Petro Canada, which has 20 other partnerships for gas stations on urban reserves in western Canada. The first was over a decade ago in Saskatchewan. Madison Avenue is the first Petro Canada station to open on land owned by a Manitoba First Nation.

There are two other urban reserves on the city's outskirts. Swan Lake First Nation runs The Arboc Smoke Shop and Gas Bar on Portage Avenue in Headingley. Land owned by

Roseau River First Nation off Hwy. 6 in Rosser is the location for the Red Sun Smoke Shop and Gas Bar.

Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/Citys-first-urban-reserve-opens-Petro-Canada-gas-station--293719281.html>

Minister Valcourt to meet with AFN National Chief Bellegarde

[National News](#) | 21 hours ago by [APTN National News](#) |



APTN National News

OTTAWA—Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt has agreed to meet with Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde in the wake of the deadly fire on a Saskatchewan First Nation that left two children dead.

Valcourt's office said Tuesday the minister would meet with Bellegarde who requested the encounter in a letter sent Friday.

The time and location for the meeting is still being worked out with AFN officials, said Valcourt's spokesperson Emily Hillstrom in an email.

The AFN issued a statement from Bellegarde saying an immediate meeting was necessary.

"Our letter to the minister calling for an immediate meeting is because of the urgent need to protect First Nations families and children," said Bellegarde's statement. "That's our focus going into the meeting and we're seeking a shared commitment for action and change."

Bellegarde sent the letter requesting the meeting to Valcourt via fax on Friday. Bellegarde said in the letter he wanted to discuss lifting the two per cent cap placed on yearly funding for First Nations.

Bellegarde said the cap has left many First Nation communities struggling with limited resources which creates situations like the tragic one last Tuesday on the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation.

“The situation is at a crisis level and the reasons all point to the fact the government of Canada provides insufficient funds to First Nations to adequately provide their members a safe and healthy environment,” said Bellegarde, in the letter. “The time is now to work together to address the challenges facing First Nations in terms of fire prevention and protection. Directly related to this is an open and honest discussion on lifting the 2 per cent cap on First Nations funding.”

Valcourt has blamed Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation for not having the ability to fight the fire last Tuesday that killed the two children. Facing questions from the NDP during question period Thursday, Valcourt said his department was giving First Nations adequate resources to deal with things like fire prevention and firefighting.

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The Loon Lake volunteer fire department did not respond to the fire in Makwa Sahgaiehcan because the band was three months behind on its fire bill.

Local RCMP officers were the first responders on the scene and they saw the biological father bring his two-year-old boy and 18-month-old daughter out of the burning home.

Valcourt’s office says the department gave Makwa Sahgaiehcan \$34,000 for fire prevention and services in the 2014-2015 fiscal year.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/02/24/minister-valcourt-meet-afn-national-chief-bellegarde/>

Aboriginal Biking Program Keeps Kids Active, in Nature

[Sam Laskaris](#)

2/25/15

Patrick Lucas has seen some small steps of progress. But Lucas, the founder of the Aboriginal Youth Mountain Bike Program in the Canadian province of British Columbia, is hoping his venture grows into something much, much bigger.

Lucas, a community planner, is not Aboriginal, but he has worked extensively with First Nations communities over the years. In 2012, he founded the mountain bike program, which encourages youth to live healthier lives through riding. The program also aims to have youth reconnect with nature and land through mountain biking.

Since the program's inception, Lucas, and others keen about the project, have traveled to four First Nations communities. Once there, they have provided mountain biking and trail riding clinics. And in a couple of cases they have stuck around for several days to help build a small mountain bike park, complete with ramps and jumps. "When I see they're using the park it gives us a sense of hope," Lucas told ICTMN. "And they all say it's a big help in keeping the kids active."

Some other activities in the program involve bringing mountain bikes to the communities for those youth who do not have one to ride; and training is also provided on how to repair and maintain bikes, and how to construct and maintain trails.



Young bikers get ready for a bike ride across some rough terrain. (via Facebook)

Kate Joraanstad is one of the youngsters who took part in Lucas's clinic in Beecher Bay. "I liked the obstacles the best," said Joraanstad, 11, who borrowed a bike to take part in the day's activities. "You could ride up and down them."

Lucas hopes 2015 will be the most active year yet for the program. "We're really excited about this year," he said. "We have some pretty ambitious ideas. We're still building, but so far we have 4-5 communities to do some programming with this year."

His project has received grants from four groups: Mountain Equipment Co-Op, Vancouver Foundation, Via Sports and the Aboriginal Youth Sports Legacy Fund. Lucas

also started a [crowdfunding campaign](#) in early February, to raise at least \$5,000 for the program. Almost copy,600 had been raised as of Feb. 22.

While some organizations and First Nations communities are willing to pump money into other athletic pursuits such as hockey and basketball, Lucas believes more needs to be done to sell people onto the benefits of mountain biking. "Mountain biking really isn't on the radar for a lot of First Nation communities even though a lot of the kids ride," he said.

From previous visits to communities Lucas said there are a fair number of Aboriginal youth that do enjoy mountain biking. Sometimes the adults in the community don't realize how avid some of the riders are. He's found some youth ride with their friends through some rugged terrain in their local woods. "They want to be out in the woods with their friends," Lucas said, adding his group is keen to revitalize some trails in order to make them safer for riders. "[The adults] don't even realize the kids are doing that and that this is going on."

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/02/25/aboriginal-biking-program-keeps-kids-active-nature-159369>

What Can the Inuit and Nuer Teach Us About Sharing?

Posted: 02/25/2015 12:03 pm EST Updated: 02/25/2015 12:59 pm EST



Joel Tauber, "SHARE" (photo direction: Joel Tauber, shot by Kristi Chan) from the art installation and movie, "The Sharing Project"

I was talking with the anthropologist David Graeber about how communism forms the baseline of all human interactions, even in the most capitalistic societies. *Communism* is a loaded term, but it really should be understood as a kind of transactional morality, where we act according to [Louis Blanc's](#) principle, *from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs*. When we don't keep track of who is giving what to whom, we are acting in a communistic way.

Sharing, in its purest form, is communistic. It occurs when no one claims exclusive ownership. It happens when people share what they believe belongs to everyone, or to their particular community.

When my son Zeke and his friends play harmoniously with the communal toys at school, they are sharing in a communistic way. When Zeke and his brother Ozzie take turns playing with our family's communal toys at home, they are also practicing this kind of sharing.

In Greenland, an Inuit once explained to the anthropologist Peter Freuchen why he would be willing to share several hundred pounds of meat with a hunter that hadn't been as successful: "Up in our country we are human! ... And since we are human we help each other. We don't like to hear anybody say thanks for that. What I get today you may get tomorrow. Up here we say that by gifts, one makes slaves, and by whips, one makes dogs."

Since the Inuit hunter believed that everyone has the right to eat, it made no sense for him to claim exclusive ownership of the meat. If the meat is not considered private property, the idea of gifting the meat is nonsensical. Once private ownership is dismissed, it's only possible to share it in a communistic way.

However, private ownership is not always dismissed.

[E.E. Evans-Pritchard](#) and Graeber describe how the Nuer in South Sudan share food and other necessities freely with members of their camp, but they never share their cattle with each other. Indeed, they will literally defend their cattle with their lives.

I was thinking about the Nuer when Zeke invited his friend, Zev, over for a play-date. At the time, Zeke's prized possession was his guitar. Zev wanted to play with it, and Zeke, quite reasonably, refused. I asked Zeke to share his guitar, even though I had made it clear to both Zeke and Zev that I was not willing to share the camera that I was using to film them. Indeed, I would not even let them touch the camera, fearing that they might damage it. Zeke, probably sensing my inconsistency, clung to his guitar as if his life depended on it. Zev grabbed it too, and they spun around the room. Eventually, Zeke relented. Zeke and Zev took turns playing the guitar, and they both seemed happy. It was beautiful, but I was left feeling like a hypocrite. Why should Zeke share his most special possession when I was not willing to do the same thing?

In the United States, we keep much of our property to ourselves, but we do share certain things in communistic ways. We share office supplies with our co-workers, and we share pretty much everything while camping. We share directions freely with strangers; and we post all kinds of information online for everyone's benefit, despite new restrictions from Facebook and other corporate entities.

Everyone has the right to enjoy our parks, libraries, and public schools; and, at least for the most part, our air, oceans, lakes, and rivers belong to all of us. There have been

attempts to privatize our parks and water, and funding for our schools and libraries are often threatened; yet they still remain part of the public domain. We share their pleasures as well as the responsibilities of maintaining them.

Of course, some of us share a lot more than others. There may not be as many socialist communes in the United States as there were in other periods, like the [19th century](#); but they certainly still exist, and people continue to live in them.

I understand the appeal of the socialist commune, and I've fantasized about living in one at different times of my life. When I was 18, I spent the summer on a kibbutz in Israel. I didn't want to leave. I was drawn to the beauty of living a life where we shared everything in communistic ways, but I must have been even more enticed by the American Dream. After a summer of picking carrots and working in a salami factory, I moved back to the States to pursue my personal ambitions.

The ideal of communistic sharing continues to inspire me, and it seems to entice many others as well. People are excited by new online sites like [rideshare.com](#), [couchsurfing.com](#), and [mealshare.org](#); and many are sharing in ways that they wouldn't have imagined previously.

I don't know if I would have been happier if I had stayed on the kibbutz, but I almost certainly would understand more about sharing if I did. One of my brothers has been living on a kibbutz for many years, and we are planning to visit him soon. I'm eager to find out what we will learn about sharing in the process.

Joel Tauber is an artist and filmmaker who teaches experimental film and orchestrates the video art program at Wake Forest University. His current undertaking - "The Sharing Project" - will be presented as both a sculptural video installation ([Adamski Gallery For Contemporary Art](#), Berlin, April 2 - 29; [The University Art Museum at Cal State Long Beach](#), June 12 - July 12) and a feature film. <http://thesharingproject.net>.

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joel-tauber/what-can-the-inuit-and-nuer-teach-us-about-sharing_b_6744946.html

Aboriginal Crime & Justice

Bill C-51 dangerous legislation, says Manitoba First Nations leader

Community organizer says legislation is meant to target environmental activists, not extremist groups

By Jillian Taylor, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 23, 2015 5:00 AM CT Last Updated: Feb 23, 2015 8:37 AM CT



"We are a country who hasn't been attacked," says Grand Chief Terrance Nelson, who leads the Southern Chiefs Organization. He says Bill C-51 is dangerous.

Grand Chief Terrance Nelson says there is no need for anti-terror legislation in Canada.

He calls Bill C-51 dangerous.

"We are a country who hasn't been attacked," says Nelson, who leads the Southern Chiefs Organization.

"We haven't lived in the Syrias and the Libyas and the Iraqs. Other people strive for the kind of peace we have."

The Bill would give law enforcement the power to disrupt potential terrorist plots and detain suspects who "may" carry out rather than "will carry" out terrorist activity.

It was tabled at the end of January following a deadly attack on Parliament Hill in the fall.

Cpl. Nathan Cirillo was shot and killed by so-called "lone wolf" Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, who was also gunned down on Parliament Hill.

"These polices, what I term the 'hide in a broom closet Prime Minister,' living in fear of real or imagined jihadists," says Nelson.

Nelson fears aboriginal people, exercising their right to protest, will get arrested under this legislation.

"Treaty rights, land rights, natural resource development, any protest like that, they could be considered eco terrorists," he said.

Those concerns are being echoed at the grassroots level.

Community organizer Michael Kannon is also opposed to Bill C-51.

Kannon has been active with Idle No More and has organized public events such as round dances at Portage and Main.

He believes this legislation is meant to target environmental activists, not extremist groups.

"It seems that the RCMP have left it up to the oil lobbies to determine what is a threat," says Kannon.

He says he would hate to see this legislation become a reason for peaceful protesters to clash with law enforcement.

"Climate change is a real threat, not grandmothers holding up an eagle feather," he says.

The NDP also expressed concerns with the bill and put forth a number of [amendments](#).

It will be put to a vote on Monday evening, just before the House votes on the main bill.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/bill-c-51-dangerous-legislation-says-manitoba-first-nations-leader-1.2966795>

Leadership needed on First Nation reserves: Wall

More gov't funding needed to prevent First Nation deaths: Bellegarde

By Andrea Hill, The StarPhoenix February 25, 2015



An 18-month-old girl and two-year-old boy died in a blaze at a home on the Makwa Sahgaiechan First Nation, approximately 310 kilometres northwest of Saskatoon early Tuesday morning.

The house fire on a northern Saskatchewan reserve that killed two toddlers “underscores the need for leadership” in First Nations communities, the premier said.

“You need leadership at the community level on all of these issues and, in this case, the community are First Nations,” Brad Wall told reporters Wednesday.

“Chiefs and council in this province and right across the country get paid, as they should, and some of them get paid a lot. They get paid to make the decisions, to make choices on behalf of their members, of their First Nation, and protection and safety has to be at the top of the list.”

For the 2013-14 fiscal year, almost 80 chiefs and councillors in Saskatchewan received more than \$100,000 in compensation, including travel expenses and salary.

Wall applauded Saskatoon Tribal Council Chief Felix Thomas who, on Tuesday, announced that his council is reviewing fire protection services in its seven communities.

“That’s the kind of leadership we need,” Wall said.

Two-year-old Harley Cheenanow and his 18-month-old sister Haley were killed in the early hours of Feb. 17 when a fire broke out at their home on the Makwa Sahgaiechan First Nation.

The mayor and volunteer fire chief of nearby Loon Lake had received a call about the fire, but his crew didn’t attend because Makwa Sahgaiechan First Nation had unpaid bills, which meant its firefighting contract with Loon Lake had been cancelled as of Jan. 30.

The provincial Emergency Management and Fire Services division said in a statement Wednesday that the cause of the fire is “undetermined” and the exact point of ignition is unknown. The home had a battery-operated smoke detector, but it’s not clear whether it was working.

More government funding needed to prevent First Nation deaths, says Bellegarde

Perry Bellegarde, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, wrote to the federal government last week demanding a re-evaluation of funding to First Nations in light of the “heartbreaking” incident.

“The situation is at crisis level,” Bellegarde said in his Feb. 20 letter to Bernard Valcourt, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. “The reasons all point to the fact that the Government of Canada provides insufficient funds to First Nations to adequately provide their members a safe and healthy environment.”

“We must address immediate needs of safety and security for our people and communities and we must engage on discussions towards a new fiscal relationship,” he said in his letter.

He asked government to lift the cap on annual funding for First Nations; increases to funding have been capped at two per cent since 1996.

“It is time to lift this cap and replace it with appropriate cost escalators,” Bellegarde said. “The longer we live and operate under these restrictive policies the more we are jeopardizing the health and safety of First Nations citizens.”

Valcourt was asked in Question Period last week what government was doing to prevent tragedies similar to that in Makwa Sahgaiehcan.

He told the House that Makwa Sahgaiehcan “has received consistent funding for fire protection services over the years.”

“The Government of Canada provides First Nations across the country with funds every year for fire protection. Each band council is responsible for fire management and protection on reserve.”

Emily Hillstrom, a spokesperson for Valcourt, said the minister has received Bellegarde’s letter and is working to arrange a meeting with him.

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/More+funding+needed+prevent+First+Nation+death+s+Bellegarde/10841713/story.html>

Aboriginal Education & Youth

Aboriginal literacy pilot project dramatically improves test scores

JOE FRIESEN

The Globe and Mail

Published Tuesday, Feb. 24 2015, 6:00 AM EST

Last updated Tuesday, Feb. 24 2015, 6:00 AM EST

In 2010, elementary students at a pair of First Nation reserve schools in Ontario were struggling badly on basic literacy tests. Five years later, after an intensive intervention

that taught teachers new methods, raised expectations for students and introduced a mandatory 90 minutes of daily reading and writing instruction, their test scores have improved dramatically, a result its backers hope will encourage governments to adopt its lessons for tackling the gap in indigenous educational achievement.

The Model School Project, known as Wiji Kakendaasodaa, was launched at the Hillside School on the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation and at the Walpole Island Elementary School in September, 2010. The project was funded in part through former prime minister Paul Martin's aboriginal education initiative. Its goal was to demand more of teachers and to see students reach their potential. Nearly 40 per cent of indigenous Canadians did not graduate high school, and the figure is nearly 60 per cent for First Nations people on reserves, rates that far exceed the Canadian average.

Mr. Martin, who will present a report on the project in Toronto on Tuesday, said the program focuses on literacy because it is crucial to long-term success.

"Kids were not learning to read and write by Grade 3, and if you don't learn to read and write by Grade 3, you are handicapped all the way through," Mr. Martin said. "Bringing the literacy numbers up to the provincial average became essential for us. The question was, 'How do we do it?'"

Mr. Martin, in collaboration with the local chiefs and schools, brought in a team led by Julia O'Sullivan, the dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. They assembled education experts to work with the local teachers under a model the Ontario government used to turn around struggling schools a decade ago.

"We focused on improving the quality of teaching because we know once children step into school, it's the quality of teaching that makes the difference," Dr. O'Sullivan said. "When I agreed to do this, I said to Mr. Martin, 'I'll declare this a success not when people think the children can read better, not when people feel the children can read better, but when I have solid evidence that they actually have improved significantly.'"

Dr. O'Sullivan called the program "a phenomenal success." The year before it began, only 13 per cent of students achieved the provincial standard on grade three reading tests, and only 33 per cent met the standard on writing tests. By 2014, just less than 70 per cent of the school's students met the reading standard, very close to the provincial average, and more than 90 per cent met the writing benchmark, significantly higher than the Ontario average.

Craig Lindsay, vice-principal at Hillside, said his school has been transformed. It used to be that if students were asked what they liked to read, they responded that reading was hard, there were no books at home or that nothing interested them, he said.

Now nearly everyone reads, he said, and parents have been engaged through family literacy days and events that recognize student achievement.

“Number one is getting the teachers on board and believing in the students,” Mr. Lindsay said. His school has about 140 students from kindergarten to Grade 8, all First Nations, and classes are mainly in English, although Ojibwa is taught in every grade.

When he arrived from outside the community, Mr. Lindsay said he got the sense from some teachers that the students could not meet high standards.

“They’ll never be able to do it, don’t worry, do what you can, that kind of attitude. I’ve never felt good about that, and I always pushed my students, but it was easy to accept where they were at the end of the year. Now we’re not going to accept that,” Mr. Lindsay said. “You know you can do better. It’s just that drive, we believe in the students and the students are believing in themselves.”

Mr. Martin said he hopes the program, which he described as fairly expensive, will be expanded to other reserves, which are under federal jurisdiction. But that will be up to the federal government and local band councils, he said.

“What this demonstrates so clearly is what indigenous education can be,” Mr. Martin said. “The dropout rates you hear about on reserve, these are issues we can attack and we can win the battle.”

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/aboriginal-literacy-pilot-project-dramatically-improves-test-scores/article23169553/>

Indigenous school division proposed for Winnipeg

By: Ashley Prest

Posted: 02/24/2015 10:05 PM |

The creation of a proposed indigenous school division for Winnipeg could have the power to improve the health of aboriginal communities, members of the public heard Tuesday night.

A crowd of about 200 at the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre of Winnipeg heard how the proposed Winnipeg Indigenous School Division would include 29 existing schools, offer the same academic programming as other divisions but include a focus on indigenous languages, traditions, customs and values.

"What is so important about the concept of education? If we could move the rates of graduation from Grade 12 from the 20 to 30 per cent it is right now, if we could move it up to 80 to 90 per cent, I guarantee you in one generation our health will be improved, our families will stick together, our languages will start coming back, people will be able

to mobilize our resources that stemmed from our ancestors," Barry Lavallee, the acting director of the University of Manitoba Centre for Aboriginal Health and Education, told the crowd.

Lavallee said the new school division would be primarily funded by harnessing resources that already exist in the city's school system.

"It sounds really simple and it is that simple. Right now in the educational system, there are 25,000 indigenous kids. Their bodies are counted and the resources are currently allocated," he said. "All we're suggesting is we use those resources, remobilize them. Not for all indigenous kids, but indeed for indigenous families who want their kids educated in a system that honours who they are as indigenous people."

Bill Sanderson, an educator and former school trustee in Winnipeg, said this city is home to more urban indigenous people than anywhere in Canada, but the schools in the new division would be open to all Winnipeggers from both indigenous and non-indigenous communities.

The teaching of indigenous languages would be a cornerstone of the new school division, said Patricia Ningewance Nadeau, a member of the Indigenous Language Institute board of directors and a professor of indigenous languages at the University of Manitoba. She said the goal would be for students to be taught in their traditional languages, similar to French immersion programs, so they could speak fluently by the time they graduated from Grade 12.

"My dream is to have our students learn their languages in school because it's the only place they can become fluent," Ningewance Nadeau said. "It's not possible to learn (indigenous languages) at home anymore the way we did, those of us who speak our language. That's not possible anymore for many reasons. That is broken."

In a powerful moment, Ningewance Nadeau shared a dream she had two years ago in which she was walking for a long time across a frozen lake with her young grandson who was carrying a yellow bird, which he was protecting inside his jacket. She consulted an elder to discover the meaning of the dream and was told it was symbolic of her quest to have the younger generation embrace traditional languages.

"It was spring by the time we got to the shore and we were safe and the bird was safe," Ningewance Nadeau said. "She (the elder) said the yellow bird is a symbol of the spirit that protects our languages and my grandson was carrying the bird."

It is expected it would take at least three years to establish the Winnipeg Indigenous School Division. At the conclusion of the information meeting, members of a negotiating committee were selected to move the new school division idea forward to education stakeholders.

Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/Indigenous-school-division-proposed-for-Winnipeg-293964021.html>

Ending discrimination against First Nations children in Canada

By

[Pro Bono Priya Sarin](#)

| February 26, 2015



In February 2007, a human rights complaint was filed by the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (the "Caring Society") and the Assembly of First Nations ("AFN") against the Government of Canada, alleging that the government discriminated against First Nations children by providing inequitable child welfare services to children living on-reserve as compared to children living off-reserve ([First Nations Child](#)).

In particular, the *First Nations Child* complaint alleges that the federal government's program underfunds children living on-reserve, such that children do not receive needed care and support that would permit them to continue to live at home and, as a result, First Nations children are disproportionately removed from their families in comparison to non-First Nations children. The impact of the child welfare system on First Nations communities has been compared to the legacy created by the residential school system.

After six years of delay due to procedural motions brought by the government, including a motion to [dismiss the complaint](#), the case was finally heard on the merits in late 2014. A decision is expected to be released by April 2015. This decision is important because it will have a significant impact on the rights of First Nations children in Canada.

Background

Ordinarily, child welfare services fall within provincial jurisdiction, meaning that the provincial government funds child welfare services for residents in its province. This is not the case for First Nations children who live on reserves. The federal government funds child welfare services for children living on reserves through the First Nations

Child and Family Services Program (the "Program"); however, funds are transferred from the federal government to the provinces, or government-authorized child and family services agencies to deliver services in accordance with their own provincial standards or norms.

Unfortunately, federal funding for child welfare services is often insufficient to provide services at the provincial standard. This has resulted in the federal government refusing to pay more and the provincial government refusing to provide the service needed. Access to health and social services for First Nations children on reserves in Canada was recognized as a problem in the mid-2000s, following the tragic death of Jordan River Anderson. Jordan died in the hospital at the age of 5, never having lived at home with his family, because the federal and provincial government were too busy arguing over who should pay for his home care.

In 2007, Parliament agreed to implement "Jordan's Principle," which aims to prevent First Nations children from being denied prompt access to services because of jurisdictional disputes between different levels of government. It is a child-first principle that requires the government department first contacted for a service available off-reserve to pay for it and to pursue repayment of expenses afterwards. It applies to all government services available to children, youth and their families. Jordan's Principle was recognized by the Federal Court of Canada in a [2013 decision](#), where it directed the government to ensure that First Nations children receive services in accordance with provincial/territorial practice norms and in compliance with legislated standards.

Since 2007, the federal government has been criticized by the Auditor General (Sheila Fraser in 2008), the Canadian Paediatric Society (2009), the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2012) and UNICEF (2012), among other parties and organizations, for failure to properly implement [Jordan's Principle](#).

The human rights case against Canada

Section 5 of the Canadian Human Rights Act ("CHRA") states that it is a discriminatory practice to deny an individual access to services on a prohibited ground (i.e. race; national/ethnic origin). It is also a discriminatory practice to provide publicly available services to an individual in a manner which differentiates adversely against that individual.

A "service" has been defined as an activity that: a) confers a benefit; and b) takes place in the context of a public relationship.

In *First Nations Child*, the claimants argue that discrimination can be proven against the government because:

a) Some child welfare services are denied or not provided to First Nations children (that are provided to children living off-reserve i.e. mobility devices, mental health services and orthodontics);

b) First Nations children on-reserve receive 22 per cent less funding on a per-child basis than is provided to children living off-reserve in the average province (provincial funding for child welfare services off-reserve is based on the actual number of children in care whereas federal funding is based on a formula that bears little relationship to the actual number of children in need);

c) First Nations children living on reserves suffered historical prejudice or disadvantage resulting from assimilationist policies (residential school system); and

d) The federal funding program for child welfare services perpetuates the prejudice or disadvantage of First Nations children living on reserves. (First Nations children on-reserve are eight times more likely to be taken into the child welfare system than non-Aboriginal children.)

The Program arguably perpetuates disadvantage to First Nations children because it provides unlimited resources for First Nations children who have been removed from their homes and put in foster care but grossly underfunds services designed to allow children to remain in their homes with support services (called "least disruptive measures"). The result of this Program is to provide a perverse incentive to remove First Nations children from their homes.

The federal government argues that it did not discriminate against First Nations children living on-reserve because:

a) It *only* provides funding to First Nations children on-reserve (and a comparison between federal and provincial/territorial funding systems is not a valid comparison);

b) It does not provide a "service" within the meaning of the CHRA (i.e. the funding is provided from the federal government to the provincial government or agency and not to the individual directly); and

c) The difference between the level of services and programs provided resulted from choices made by the First Nations agencies about the type of services and programs they wanted to provide to children, rather than lack of funding from government.

Based on existing case law, and the stated purpose of federal funding under the Program, it seems unlikely that the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ("CHRT") could conclude that the federal government was not providing a service to First Nations children, albeit indirectly. The Program's purpose as stated in its own manual is to "support culturally appropriate child and family services for Indian children and families resident on-reserve or ordinarily resident on-reserve, in the best interest of the child, in accordance with the legislation and standards of the reference province." The government is clearly providing a benefit to members of the public.

Further, the comparator argument put forward by the federal government appears to be both nonsensical and technical, because it is the differential impact on children in any

given province in Canada that ought to be considered, not the source or flow of funding. Additionally, the federal Program itself requires child welfare services to be provided with reference to the provincial standard. As such, it would be inappropriate to ignore the province/territory's funding levels as a comparator.

Impact of decision

The First Nations and human rights communities in Canada are anxiously waiting for the CHRT to release its decision in the *First Nations Child* case. A decision in favour of First Nations children would have a tremendous impact on their communities if the government was required to fully implement Jordan's Principle, in accordance with its true spirit, to alter its funding model to ensure adequate child welfare service levels, and to support less disruptive measures for First Nations children on-reserve.

While such a decision could open the door to multiple challenges by First Nations communities with respect to funding of other services provided on-reserve such as education, health, policing and housing, it will, first and foremost, provide a means for further reconciliation between First Nations and the Crown.

Iler Campbell LLP is a law firm serving co-ops, not-for-profits, charities and socially-minded small business and individuals in Ontario.

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Direct Link: <http://rabble.ca/columnists/2015/02/ending-discrimination-against-first-nations-children-canada>

Aboriginal Health

Successful food security initiative from NL heading to Nunavut

Published on February 19, 2015

This week a team of employees from the Food Security Network of Newfoundland & Labrador (FSN) will travel to Canada's largest territory to spearhead a program the organization adapted for improving access to healthy food in northern, Inuit communities.

FSN will provide a five-day training on the Community-led Food Assessment model in Baker Lake, Nunavut. It will be a first step in expanding the model to the region.

The Baker Lake program will be based on the FSN-coordinated food assessment programs currently up and running in three communities in Nunatsiavut, Labrador — Rigolet, Nain and Hopedale — under the name NiKigijavut Nunatsiavutinni: Our Food in Nunatsiavut.

“We are thrilled to see this program applied to other regions across Canada’s north,” says FSN Executive Director Kristie Jameson. “Our hope is that the Community-led Food Assessment model will help to inspire community-driven action towards food security in Baker Lake.”

This expansion is being done in partnership with the Nunavut Food Security Coalition, the Hamlet of Baker Lake, and the Baker Lake Health and Wellness Committee.

“The term ‘community-led’ is an important part of what makes all of these projects unique,” says Jameson. “With a community-led food assessment the discussion and decision making is happening in the community where the program is taking place, by the people involved. People understand their community’s strengths and know where things need to improve, and they’re best equipped to develop solutions that will actually work locally.”

Food security — access to healthy, culturally appropriate food for everyone — is an important issue everywhere, but especially across Canada’s north. Barriers accessing wild food, the high cost and poor quality of store-bought food, and empty store shelves are all-too-common problems.

The project has already brought about concrete changes in the Nunatsiavut communities — both small and big. In Hopedale, for example, one recommendation was to expand the community freezer program to offer a wider variety of wild food to more people. In Rigolet a Good Food Box program was created to facilitate the bulk buying of store food — reducing the cost of good quality foods.

The success of NiKigijavut Nunatsiavutinni: Our Food in Nunatsiavut is the result of partnerships with the Nunatsiavut Government; Nain, Hopedale, Makkovik, Postville, and Rigolet Inuit Community Governments; Trent University; the Nasivvik Centre for Inuit Health and Changing Environments; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami; the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Health Canada; Memorial University; and the NL government, particularly the Department of Health and Community Services. This project would not be possible without the generous funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada through the Innovation Strategy on Achieving Healthier Weights in Canada’s Communities program.

(A nonprofit founded in 1998, the Food Security Network of Newfoundland & Labrador (soon to be known as Food First NL), is at the forefront working to establish food

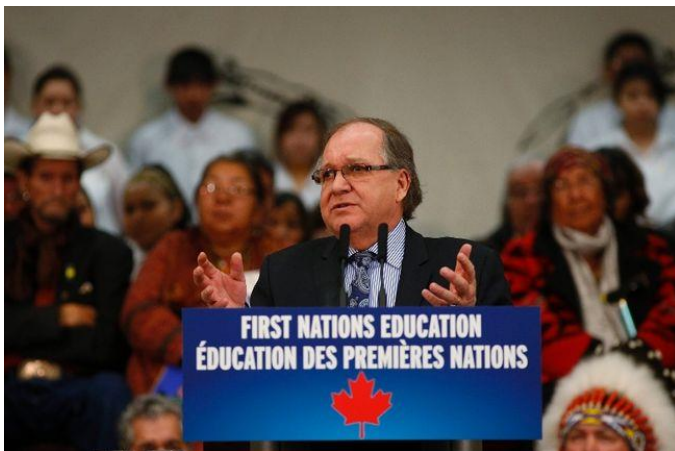
security in the province. FSN's mission is to actively promote comprehensive, community-based solutions to ensure access to adequate and healthy food for all.)

Direct Link: <http://www.atlanticfarmfocus.ca/Agriculture/2015-02-19/article-4049254/Successful-food-security-initiative-from-NL-heading-to-Nunavut/1>

Canada fails First Nations children

By [Geoffrey Johnston](#)

Thursday, February 19, 2015 8:19:46 EST PM



Life is hard for children living on First Nations reserves, where poverty, poor water quality, teen suicide, and substandard housing are all too common.

As if that weren't bad enough, First Nations children must also fight for access to health and social services that non-indigenous Canadian families take for granted.

According to UNICEF Canada, when it comes to accessing health and social services, "jurisdictional disputes between levels of government involving First Nations children are common, affecting hundreds of children every year."

Too often, government bureaucrats seem more concerned with determining which level of government should pay for First Nations health and social services than with helping vulnerable kids in need. And intra-governmental squabbles that pit departments against one another also cause unacceptable delays.

Jordan's Principle

On Dec. 12, 2007, the House of Commons unanimously passed the Jordan's Principle motion, which UNICEF Canada concisely describes as "a child-first principle to resolve intergovernmental disputes affecting the lives of First Nations children."

The historic motion endorsed the idea that meeting the health needs of indigenous children should be a top priority. And Parliament made it clear that the issue of which level of government should pay for health services should not impede the delivery of those services.

Unfortunately, much more work still needs to be done on this file. Last week, a bracing report was published, laying bare the social inequities that continue to deprive First Nations children of timely care and assistance.

The document represents the culmination of the efforts of the Jordan's Principle Working Group, "a collaboration between the Assembly of First Nations, the Canadian Paediatric Society, UNICEF Canada, and a team of researchers based at McGill University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Manitoba."

Jordan's Principle is named in honour of Jordan Rivers Anderson, a First Nations child born with severe health problems who died at the age of five. Jordan, who was a member of the Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba, lived his entire life in hospital.

Jordan "encountered tragic delays in services due to governmental jurisdictional disputes that denied him an opportunity to live outside of a hospital setting before his death in 2005," the report stated. The document is entitled "Without denial, delay or disruption: Ensuring First Nations children's access to equitable services through Jordan's Principle."

"If he hadn't been an on-reserve First Nations child, he would've gone home," said David Morley, president of UNICEF Canada, in a telephone interview. "That's what so frustrating."

According to Morley, many First Nations children have health issues, "and then they get caught in a system where they can't get the services that every other Canadian child would get, because governments are squabbling."

"Bureaucratic squabbling has meant the wishes of Parliament, and I like to think of all Canadians, that all Canadian children should have equitable access to services have not been met," Morley declared.

The gaps in access to health-related services for First Nations kids are shocking. For example, the report cited a funding dispute over a wheelchair for a paraplegic child. Health Canada refused to provide the funds to purchase the assistive device, so the First Nations child welfare agency involved in the case "deemed that fundraising was the only feasible option to provide the child with what he required."

Given the systemic gaps facing First Nations children, the appalling conditions on many reserves and the myriad of other problems, we have to ask, why is this so? Is systemic racism part of the problem?

"I think we have to look at that and consider that," Morley said thoughtfully. "Why is it so systemic? Why is it this one particular group that seems to be having a harder time than everybody else?"

Morley is no radical and understands that Canadians are people of goodwill. "I don't mean that you, or me, or we, are overtly racist," he said. "But there is something in the system that clearly isn't working."

The UNICEF-sponsored report contends that there's "growing recognition that the governmental response to Jordan's Principle does not reflect the vision advanced by First Nations and endorsed by the House of Commons."

In addition, the Assembly of First Nations has condemned "the narrow operational definition of Jordan's Principle adopted by the federal government."

However, the federal government has a different take on the situation.

"Our government is committed to the health and safety of all Canadians, including First Nations children," stated a spokesperson for Bernard Valcourt, minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

"While there are currently no outstanding jurisdictional disputes involving Jordan's Principle in Canada, we believe that the best way to ensure First Nation children and families get the support they need is by working with willing partners and continue engaging with provinces, territories and First Nations to collaborate on implementing Jordan's Principle," Emily Hillstrom wrote in an email statement.

"We have reached agreements to implement Jordan's Principle with four provinces -- Manitoba (2012), Saskatchewan (2009), British Columbia (2011) and New Brunswick (2011)," Hillstrom said on behalf of Valcourt.

"These arrangements outline commitments to developing dispute avoidance processes to ensure continuity of care for children with multiple disabilities." As for the provinces not covered by these deals, Hillstrom said they "already have mechanisms in place to implement Jordan's Principle."

According to the Aboriginal Affairs spokesperson, the federal government "also provides over \$2.5 billion every year towards programs and services for aboriginal health; this includes initiatives such as 24/7 access to essential nursing services in 80 remote communities and home and community care in 500 First Nations and Inuit communities."

Report of the Auditor General

Jordan's Principle focuses on health issues. But there are a myriad of other problems that are inextricably linked to First Nations health problems. And they merit discussion.

Living conditions on First Nations reserves are not good. Over the years, the auditor general of Canada has highlighted the many problems on reserves, including unsafe drinking water, high school dropout rates and inequitable access to social services.

The new report's sponsors -- AFN, the Canadian Paediatric Society, and UNICEF Canada -- recommend that the senior levels of government immediately clarify jurisdictional responsibilities and eliminate "the underfunding identified in individual cases." By doing so, governments could "prevent denials, delays and disruptions in services for other children in similar circumstances."

However, with the 2015 federal election campaign unofficially underway, it seems unlikely that intergovernmental negotiations on First Nations health will be undertaken anytime soon.

Nevertheless, UNICEF Canada's David Morley remains optimistic. He believes that Prime Minister Stephen Harper's historic apology, delivered in Parliament on behalf of Canada for the harm caused by the residential schools policy, is one reason for optimism.

Another is the work done by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the devastating legacy of residential schools. Morley said that the commission has demonstrated Canada's goodwill and willingness to move forward on righting historic wrongs.

"I think there's a recognition that things need to be better and that we are all responsible," Morley said.

The Assembly of First Nations did not respond to a request for comment.

Direct Link: <http://www.thewhig.com/2015/02/19/canada-fails-first-nations-children>

First Nations health: Government disputes slow process

By [Geoffrey Johnston](#)

Saturday, February 21, 2015 4:52:47 EST PM



Higher incidence of infant death and lower immunization rates among children are much more common in developing countries than in the industrialized world. That's why the soon-to-expire Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) place so much emphasis on poverty reduction and slashing child mortality rates.

Canada's international development policy is focused, in part, on advancing the MDGs. And Canada has done more than any other nation in the world over the past five years to improve the health of children and new mothers in the developing world.

To his credit, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has driven his government's international development policy, forcing child and maternal health onto the top tier of issues at G8 summits and at the United Nations. And the Conservative government has allocated billions of dollars to initiatives designed to save lives in the developing world.

For all the good work that Canada is doing in the developing world, this country is clearly not doing enough at home to improve the lives of vulnerable indigenous children, the most marginalized group in Canada.

According to the UNICEF Canada website, "the health conditions of Canada's aboriginal children are not what we would expect in one of the most affluent countries in the world." And from the perspective of the Canadian branch of the UN program, that is unacceptable, especially because "aboriginal children are the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population."

UNICEF Canada has acknowledged that progress has been made over the years in reducing the social inequities that indigenous Canadians endure.

However, the charitable nongovernmental organization (NGO) contends that "in almost any measure of health and well-being, aboriginal children -- including First Nations, Inuit and Metis -- are at least two or three times worse off than other Canadian children."

For example, indigenous children are less likely to be immunized against preventable childhood diseases than non-indigenous kids.

Infant mortality

From the moment they are born, Canada's indigenous people face greater challenges than the rest of the population. "At birth, there is a much higher rate of infant death among aboriginal children," states UNICEF Canada's Leaving No Child Behind website.

Comparing the infant mortality rates (IMRs) of Canada's indigenous peoples with the IMRs of various countries around the world is problematic. UNICEF collects extensive data on IMRs around the globe, but Canada does not compile comprehensive data on infant mortality rates for its indigenous peoples. And that presents a major empirical roadblock for public policy scholars.

For instance, a 2010 research paper revealed "significant deficiencies in the coverage and quality of infant mortality data for First Nations (Status Indians on-reserve), Indian, Inuit and Metis populations."

According to the study, "the resulting lack of reliable data on this important indicator impedes the efforts of public health workers to identify and respond to conditions leading to First Nations, Indian, Inuit and Metis infant illness and death."

The study was put together by researchers Janet Smylie (MD, MPH, CCFP), Deshayne Fell (MSc) and Arne Ohlsson (MD, MSc, FRCPC, FAAP), in conjunction with the Joint Working Group on First Nations, Indian, Inuit, and Metis Infant Mortality of the Canadian Perinatal Surveillance System.

Despite the gaps in infant mortality rates data, the researchers' review "of the most accurate available First Nations, Indian, Inuit, and Metis IMR data reveals striking and persistent disparities in the IMRs for First Nations, Status Indians living off-reserve, and Inuit-inhabited areas, compared to the general Canadian population."

The study, entitled *A Review of Aboriginal Infant Mortality Rates in Canada*, should serve as a wake-up call for politicians, policymakers, bureaucrats and the medical establishment.

For example, the study found that the infant mortality rates for First Nations, Status Indians living off-reserve and Inuit "ranged from 1.7 to over four times the overall Canadian and/or non-aboriginal rates."

Those findings are significant, because they contradict commonly cited statistics that put IMRs for First Nations between 6.2 and 6.4 deaths per 1,000 live births. In other words, commonly cited statistics tend to underestimate the rate of infant mortality among the First Nations population.

Similarly, UNICEF Canada reports that there is a significant gap between Canada's national infant mortality rate and that of indigenous Canadians. "In contrast to the national infant mortality rate of five infant deaths per 1,000 live births, the rate is eight per 1,000 among First Nations and 16 per 1,000 in Nunavut (where 85% of the population is Inuit)," asserts the NGO.

The higher infant mortality rates for Canada's indigenous peoples are comparable to those in some less-developed countries. For example, according to UNICEF data, Costa Rica had an infant mortality rate of eight per 1,000 in 2013; China had 11 per 1,000; and Jamaica had 14 per 1,000.

Inadequate services

Last week, a disturbing report on health and social services was published, detailing inequities that plague First Nations. The report, entitled *Without Denial, Delay or Disruption*, concluded that First Nations kids tend not to receive the same level of services that other Canadians take for granted.

The report was sponsored by the Assembly of First Nations, the Canadian Paediatric Society, and UNICEF Canada.

The crux of the problem is money.

The federal, provincial and territorial governments often become embroiled in jurisdictional disputes over who should pay for health services for First Nations children, causing undue delays, or even the non-delivery, of services. Intra-governmental disputes that pit departments against each other also cause unacceptable delays or denials of service.

That clearly violates the Canadian social policy standard known as Jordan's Principle.

What is Jordan's Principle? It is "a child-first principle," explained David Morley, president of UNICEF Canada, in a telephone interview.

In a nutshell, Jordan's Principle states that when a First Nations child has a health-related issue, the problem should be addressed in a timely fashion. And if there is a question as to which level of government should pay, it should be worked out after the service has been approved and delivered.

"It puts the child at the centre" of government policy, Morley said of Jordan's Principle.

Applying MDGs to First Nations

Canadians tend to think of UNICEF as an organization devoted to assisting children in the developing world. So how did UNICEF Canada end up as one of the sponsors of a report on Jordan's Principle?

"Of course, people think of UNICEF mostly working overseas," conceded Morley. But he was quick to point out that UNICEF's mandate is universal.

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, which has been endorsed by more countries than any other agreement or treaty in history, mandates UNICEF to protect and promote the rights of all children everywhere, including Canada.

"We got involved in this because when Jordan's Principle was passed, it was seen as a great victory," Morley said of an all-party motion endorsed by Parliament in 2007. "It was recognition that our governmental system is failing First Nations children, so we supported it then. And we still support the principles now."

However, Canada, as a society, has not lived up to the promise of Jordan's Principle. According to Morley, the new report "clearly shows that the wishes of Parliament are not being followed. We (at UNICEF Canada) have to get involved in it."

Morley recently attended global UNICEF meetings on developing a post-MDGs or sustainable development agenda. "These have to be the goals for the well-being of the world as a whole," he said of the post-MDG agenda.

"Just because we live in Canada, just because we live in one of the most fortunate countries in the world, doesn't mean we can't do better on these issues of health, and education, climate, and all of those other issues," Morley said.

"I don't care if we are talking about your children, my grandchildren, First Nations children, or children who are in Haiti or Liberia," said the UNICEF Canada chief. "We have to look at these stable development goals. We have to look beyond political boundaries as a part of global sustainability and think about children in the same way."

Direct Link: <http://www.thewhig.com/2015/02/20/first-nations-health-government-disputes-slow-process>

Health system struggles with racism, research shows

By Sarah Petrescu, Times Colonist February 22, 2015



Monique Pat, aboriginal liaison nurse, stands at the entrance to the All Nations Healing Room at Royal Jubilee Hospital in Victoria.

When Laurel Hanuse had a seizure in bed last year and banged her head, her boyfriend at the time called an ambulance. Foggy and injured, Hanuse needed help down three flights of stairs.

By the time the pair reached the bottom, the paramedics had already arrived.

One said loudly, “Oh great, another drunk native we have to pick up,” Hanuse recalled.

The 45-year-old, originally from Alert Bay and the Namgis First Nation, said she is now on medication to prevent seizures but would still rather have her father take her to the hospital instead of an ambulance if the need arose.

“It’s easier,” she said. Those kinds of racist remarks hurt. “Read what’s in the book; don’t judge by its cover. We’re all the same inside.”

Racism against indigenous people in the medical system is not just hurtful; a new study suggests it has resulted in substandard health care.

“There are multiple ways this impacts people’s health,” said Billie Allan, co-author of the report *First Peoples, Second Class Treatment* by the Wellesley Institute, a health-research think tank. “From the emergency rooms to funding, decisions based on racist stereotypes are an issue.”

Participants in the research described being denied treatment or hospital care based on assumptions they were drunk or troublemakers. They said this led to anticipation of being blamed for their own health problems and even prevented some from seeking medical care at all.

“This can be especially challenging for aboriginal women who might have a fear of seeking care because they are worried their kids might get taken away,” said Allan, an indigenous health researcher and social worker who noted the disproportionate number of aboriginal children in care.

Another study released last week by UNICEF Canada, the Canadian Pediatric Society and the Assembly of First Nations said the federal government is failing on its pledge to ensure aboriginal children are not denied adequate care while caught up in jurisdictional disputes.

Allan’s report states systemic racism is a serious barrier to health-care access for all indigenous people that has delayed and denied treatment, or prevented people from seeking it — people such as Victoria’s Eric Amos.

Amos, 36, avoided medical treatment after a negative experience in a Nanaimo emergency ward where a doctor asked him to urinate and undress in front of other patients.

“I said, ‘I’d rather not.’ He got short-tempered,” said Amos, originally from Tofino and the Tla-o-qui-aht and Hesquiaht First Nations. He said he was drunk and beat up at the time and wasn’t sure if racism or stereotypes were a factor, but even the possibility prevented him from later seeking medical attention for a colitis complication.

“I ended up in the hospital for two weeks,” said Amos, noting his 78-year-old grandmother refuses to go to a doctor and prefers traditional medicine.

Allan said she hopes the report will bring attention to the issues of systemic racism in health care in Canada, and ultimately to programs that are trying to change them, such as the new First Nations Health Authority in B.C., which works with different levels of government to provide holistic and culturally appropriate care and advancements in various communities.

“We want to know more to support interventions that work so that we can help each other,” Allan said.

Ian Knipe, director of aboriginal health for Island Health, said this is a priority for the health authority.

“We’re very concerned and disturbed when we hear about negative incidents of aboriginal people accessing health care,” Knipe said. He noted personal experiences and a distrust of mainstream systems in the context of colonization, residential schools and child welfare can affect health-care access.

“Island Health is not alone in terms of struggling with issues of people not feeling respected. This is across Canada.”

He said the health authority has a number of initiatives underway to address issues of racism and to reach out to aboriginal people. They are also actively recruiting in aboriginal schools and communities to add to the 500 staff who have aboriginal heritage.

Knipe said one of the most successful programs has been the introduction of aboriginal liaison nurses in hospitals across the Island. The nurses support and advocate culturally appropriate care at the request of patients, their families or friends. This includes arranging access to the All Nations Healing Room in the new patient care centre at Royal Jubilee Hospital.

“It’s a dedicated space where someone can go to practise traditional medicine. ... If they want to do a smudge ceremony, the smoke won’t interfere with alarms, for example,” Knipe said, noting other outreach initiatives, such as cultural safety facilitators who work in a variety of hospitals and programs.

“What cultural safety does is invite the person to reflect on their own attitudes and assumptions,” Knipe said. Each year, more than 500 employees also go through online cultural competency training, which includes information specific to aboriginal communities on the Island.

Knipe said input from local aboriginal communities contributed to the design of new hospitals in Comox and Campbell River. They include All Nations Healing Rooms and larger labour and delivery rooms to accommodate extended families.

Direct Link:

<http://www.vancouversun.com/health/Health+system+struggles+with+racism+research+shows/10833871/story.html>

Brian Clement, Hippocrates Health Institute head, ordered to stop practising medicine

Director of spa that treated Makayla Sault and J.J. ordered to 'cease and desist'

By Connie Walker, Marnie Luke, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 24, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Feb 25, 2015 11:34 AM ET

Brian Clement, director of the Florida health spa that provided therapy to leukemia patient Makayla Sault before her death and another Ontario First Nations girl still battling the disease, has been ordered to stop practising medicine without a licence and fined for representing himself as a medical doctor.

In documents obtained by CBC News, Florida's Department of Health says it has probable cause to believe the director of the Hippocrates Health Institute treated two children battling leukemia "with unproven and possibly dangerous therapies."

In July, 11-year-old Makayla Sault attended the Hippocrates Health Institute after leaving chemotherapy at McMaster Children's Hospital in Hamilton.



Makayla Sault, 11, who lived on an Ontario First Nation, was fighting leukemia and died in January after a relapse. She attended the Hippocrates Health Institute in Florida after leaving chemotherapy treatment last year.

Makayla died last month, after suffering a relapse. The Ontario's coroner's office is investigating.

J.J., 11, had left chemotherapy to attend the Hippocrates institute last August. Her identity can't be revealed because of a publication ban. In both girls' cases, the Brant Children's Aid Society was called in to investigate but did not intervene.

J.J.'s mother told CBC News that she was convinced her daughter should abandon chemotherapy after speaking with Clement.

"By him saying, 'Oh yes, no problem we can help her,' that's the day I stopped the chemo."

Clement denies having said this to the girl's mother.

"They would use the word cure. 'We're going to cure your illness,'" - *Steven Pugh, former nurse at Hippocrates Health Institute*

She says J.J. was treated with laser therapy, vitamins administered intravenously and a strict raw food diet that she was advised to maintain for two years.

A letter from Florida health authorities hand-delivered to Clement and dated Feb. 10, 2015, orders him to "cease and desist" and accuses him of misrepresenting himself as a medical doctor. Clement has been ordered to pay a fine of \$3,738 US and was given 30 days to respond.

The investigation is continuing and the Department of Health warns, "This citation does not prevent other administrative, civil or criminal prosecution."

Practising medicine without a licence is a felony in Florida, and if convicted Clement could face a range of penalties including jail time.

Former employees suing Clement

Hippocrates Health Institute bills itself as an educational institution, but Florida has licensed it as a massage establishment. According to a 2013 tax return, the institute earned \$22 million US in revenue and the Clements took home over a million dollars.

CBC News has spoken to former Hippocrates Health Institute employees who are pursuing legal action against Clement.

Steven Pugh, who worked as a nurse, claims he was fired for speaking up about Clement practising medicine, including prescribing treatments to patients facing serious illnesses.

He says he was concerned that Clements and his wife, Anna Maria, were giving false hope to patients.

"They would use the word cure. 'We're going to cure your illness,'" Pugh says.



Brian and Anna Maria Clement are co-directors of the Hippocrates Health Institute in Florida. (Hippocrates Health Institute)

Hippocrates is licensed as a "massage establishment," and neither of the Clements is a licensed medical doctor, though both have referred to themselves as doctors with clients.

Prior to CBC's investigation, the Clements used "Dr." to describe themselves on the institute's website, but have since deleted those titles.

Degrees from 'diploma mill'

Clement claims to have a doctorate of naturopathic medicine and a PhD in nutrition from the University of Science Arts and Technology (USAT), based in Montserrat.

However, USAT president Orien Tulp said, "Brian Clement, he is not a naturopathic doctor from USAT. I can guarantee that. He shouldn't be making false claims for one. If he is, I'll withdraw his degree."

George Gollin, a professor at the University of Illinois who has investigated USAT, calls it a diploma mill.

"It's horrible," Gollin says. "I could have printed him a degree on a laser printer and it would be ... just as indicative of training and skills. What I think is terrible is that he's using this, as I understand it, to treat patients who are desperately sick children."

Institute popular with Canadians

Canadians represent a significant part of the Hippocrates Health Institute's business, with sources telling CBC that more than a third of its customers at any given time could come from north of the border.

Clement has travelled extensively in Canada, and has given 19 different talks in towns and cities across the country, including two on Six Nations.

In a video obtained by CBC News, Clement says his institute teaches people to "heal themselves" from cancer.

"We've had more people reverse cancer than any institute in the history of health care," he says. "So when McGill fails or Toronto hospital fails, they come to us. Stage 4 (cancer), and they reverse it."

Clement is scheduled to give a lecture in Calgary next month and in Vancouver in April.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/brian-clement-hippocrates-health-institute-head-ordered-to-stop-practising-medicine-1.2968780>

Aboriginal girl thought chemo would kill her before cancer, mother says

By Staff The Canadian Press
February 26, 2015 1:39 pm



Makayla Sault, 11, reads a statement in a YouTube video on why she is quitting her chemotherapy treatment posted May 13, 2014.

HAMILTON – The parents of a [young aboriginal girl who died after refusing to continue chemotherapy](#) say their daughter made the difficult decision because she felt the treatment would kill her before cancer would.

Sonya Sault says chemo took such a horrendous toll on her 11-year-old daughter, Makayla, that she nearly died of septic shock three weeks after beginning the treatment.

Makayla, who suffered from a rare form of leukemia, died last month after suffering a stroke, and her parents blamed her death on “the harsh side effects” 11 weeks of chemotherapy inflicted on her body.

Sonya Sault says doctors at McMaster Children’s Hospital in Hamilton had given her daughter at most a 72 per cent chance of survival if she received chemotherapy treatment for several years.

Sault says her daughter continued to receive other forms of treatment from an oncologist at McMaster hospital as well as her own physician near home, until she died at home “in her parents arms.”

Sault made the comments today at an aboriginal health conference organized by McMaster University.

Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/1852642/aboriginal-girl-thought-chemo-would-kill-her-before-cancer-mother-says/>

Aboriginal Identity & Representation

**Canada's negligence and indifference is killing
Indigenous people**

By

[Pamela Palmater](#)

| February 20, 2015



Racism doesn't just hurt our feelings - racism kills. The two senseless deaths of First Nations children in a house fire in Makwa Sahgaiehan First Nation in Saskatchewan from an unpaid bill of less than \$4,000 has sparked outrage across Canada. In no other place in Canada would an ambulance, fire fighter or police officer ask a provincial resident if they had paid their taxes before answering an emergency call for help. Canada has a deep-seated racism problem which is killing our people. But to truly understand Indigenous outrage and sadness, one must understand both the context and true depth of this problem in Canada.

Indifference is nothing new

In the mid-1700s, colonial governments in what is now Nova Scotia considered the Mi'kmaw Nation to be "rebels" because we refused to give up our land. As a result, Governor Cornwallis issued a scalping proclamation that decimated the Mi'kmaw Nation by as much as 80 per cent. In 1971, Donald Marshall Jr., was sentenced to life in prison for murder and spent 11 years in jail before his wrongful prosecution was exposed. A subsequent Royal Commission found the reason for his imprisonment was racism against Mi'kmaw people by all levels of the justice system.

In 1999, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed that the Mi'kmaw right to fish and trade it commercially was protected in our constitutionally-protected treaties. The result? Canada sent in law enforcement to beat, pepper spray and run over our fishing boats -- in addition to legal charges. In 2013, Elsipogtog First Nation and other members of the Mi'kmaw Nation who supported their anti-fracking stance in Mi'kmaw territory were labeled "terrorists", "militants" and "bad Indians". The scalping law was not used but our people were beaten and imprisoned.

From small pox blankets and scalping bounties to imprisonment and neglect -- Canada is killing our people and Canadians will be next if nothing is done to change the value (or lack thereof) that we collectively put on human life -- all human life. This dictatorial, police state is not what newcomers to Canada had in mind when they came to Canada. A

territory shared with Indigenous Nations based on formal agreements (treaties) and information agreement (alliances) were founded on three principles: one, mutual respect; two, mutual prosperity; and three, mutual protection. Indigenous peoples, their families, communities and Nations protected and cared for newcomers. Our people fought in Canada's world wars to protect our shared territory and people. Now it's time for Canadians to stand up for Indigenous peoples.

In 1971, Helen Betty Osborne was kidnapped and murdered in The Pas, Manitoba. Her grieving friends and family were treated like criminals while the accused men were given the royal treatment by law enforcement and left to walk free for years. This wasn't the first time our Indigenous women and little girls have been victims of a racist Canada, but no action was taken. Today, Canadians are well aware of the thousands of Indigenous women and little girls have gone murdered and/or missing in Canada. Yet, there is no sense of alarm in Parliament, nor has the Canadian state taken any steps to work with First Nations to embark on an inquiry or implement an emergency action plan.

By 1996, the last residential school had closed which was supposed to mark an end to the theft of Indigenous children from our Indigenous families, communities and Nations. Literally thousands of Indigenous children were victims of murders, rapes, tortures and medical experiments -- and in the early 1900s, [upwards of 40 per cent never made it out of those schools alive](#). The legacy of thousands of our children who died as a matter of state law and policy should at least have included a promise to stop stealing our children. Today, we have more than 30,000 Indigenous children in care and growing. The problems have not stopped -- they are getting worse.

The use of small pox blankets on our people to try to kill us off faster has been described by medical doctors as the first example of "biological warfare" during non-war times. Indigenous women and little girls were forcibly sterilized without their knowledge and consent for decades in an effort to stop us from reproducing. The Canadian state does not need to use such blatant policies to reduce our populations anymore -- willful neglect has the same lethal effect. Federal, provincial and municipal governments are standing by while our people die. This is not an "Indian problem" -- this is a Canadian problem that impacts every single Canadian and our collective future.

In 2005, Jordan River Anderson, a little boy from Norway House Cree Nation with many medical issues, died in hospital at five-years old never having seen his home because the federal and provincial governments couldn't stop arguing over who would pay. In 2008, Brian Sinclair, a double amputee, whose family had roots in Berens River and Fort Alexander First Nations, died after waiting 34 hours in a hospital waiting room waiting for treatment for a bladder infection -- while nearly 200 people passed him by -- including staff who wrongly assumed he was "sleeping it off".

Canada's failure to act

The former Auditor General for Canada raised the alarms about discriminatory funding and the failure by Indian Affairs to take action on programs that would significantly impact the lives of First Nations. The Office of the Correctional Investigator has called the increasing over-representation of Indigenous peoples a crisis that needs to be addressed. The United Nations Special Rapporteur has made numerous recommendations on how Canada can address this multi-faceted crisis in First Nations. But Canada fails to take action.

Despite Canada's failure to act, First Nations continue to try to raise the alarm bells on this lethal situation. A failure to address the chronic underfunding has led to First Nations being 10 times more likely to die in a house fire than Canadians. Indian Affairs' own report done in 2011 indicated that a minimum of \$28 million dollars was needed to prevent deadly fires in Manitoba alone -- yet all 633 First Nations in Canada only get \$26 million.

Canada sits back and watches our people die needless deaths while we struggle to heal our families and communities, to rebuild after the theft of our lands and resources and to resist ongoing attempts to assimilate and eliminate us. The herculean effort at the grassroots level to protect our people is made more difficult by state propaganda that would blame us for our own misery, or deflect media attention by vilifying our leaders. Now Bill C-51 will make those of us who speak out against such inhumanity all "terrorists." Then who will defend this territory?

The Chief Coroner for Ontario released an especially rare and powerful report in 2011 on the child suicide epidemic in Pikangikum First Nation which had declared a state of emergency -- a desperate call for help that went unanswered by Canada. Within a two-year period between 2006 and 2008, 16 children between the ages of 10-19 committed suicide. 16 children died -- not from accidental car crashes or unpreventable diseases but because the "basic necessities of life are absent" in Pikangikum who struggles to heal and survive amidst the "backdrop of colonialism, racism and social exclusion" and government neglect.

Sixteen little First Nation children committed suicide because the Canadian state creates and maintains the conditions of life that will either kill them or make them so hopeless they will kill themselves. That's the UN definition of genocide.

In the words of the coroner, this "was not a story of capitulation to death, but rather, a story of stamina, endurance, tolerance, and resiliency stretched beyond human limits until finally, they simply could take no more."

In what vision of Canada are the ongoing deaths of our people okay? We need Canadians to stand beside First Nations and support us as we defend the health of our lands and waters as well as the rights and freedoms of Canadians. This should not be our burden to bear alone anymore. Help us turn this ship around before we lose any more precious children.

Direct Link: <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/pamela-palmater/2015/02/canadas-negligence-and-indifference-killing-indigenous-people>

Aboriginal Inequality & Poverty

Nunavik's GDP rising, but Inuit not getting wealthier: study

"Your economy is growing really fast"

SARAH ROGERS

February 25, 2015 - 5:59 am



Véronique Robichaud, an economist from Laval university in Quebec City, presented Nunavik's economic portrait to KRG councillors Feb. 24. (PHOTO BY SARAH ROGERS)

KUUIJUAQ — Nunavik's gross domestic product, or GDP, has risen rapidly over the last decade, thanks to the region's small but growing mining industry.

The region's GDP — which refers to the market value of all goods and services produced within a given period — has more than tripled over 10 years, from \$291 million in 2003 to \$887 million in 2012, according to a new report prepared by Laval university economists.

"This is huge," said Laval economist Véronique Robichaud in a presentation to Kativik Regional Government council in Kuujuaq Feb. 24.

"Canada and Quebec did not encounter such a big growth in the past 10 years. Your economy is growing really fast."

While public administration used to be the biggest economic driver in the region — accounting for over half of the region’s GDP — it dropped to 32 per cent.

In 2012, mining made up 41 per cent of Nunavik’s GDP, compared to just 1.5 per cent in all of Quebec.

Those figures, based on 2012 data, are based almost entirely on activity at the only mine operating in the region at the time — the Glencore Raglan nickel mine. Canadian Royalties Nunavik Nickel mine went into production in late 2013.

Thanks to Raglan’s operations, GDP per capita rose to \$70,000 for each Nunavik resident in 2012, compared to just \$42,000 per person in all of Quebec.

But before anyone thinks that translates into instant wealth for Nunavimmiut, Robichaud points to Nunavik’s disposable income, which registers at about \$22,000 per person.

Because the Glencore Raglan mine is not locally owned, and employs more staff from outside of the region than local Nunavimmiut, most of the \$345 million it made in 2012 did not stay in northern Quebec.

“So people in Nunavik have less in their pockets than the rest of Quebec,” Robichaud told KRG councillors.

“When I hear Plan Nord promising to create jobs in Nunavik, it doesn’t necessarily mean for residents of Nunavik. You have to consider that when signing agreements.”

Although Nunavik’s disposable income is lower than Quebec’s — about \$26,000 per person in 2012 — the gap is shrinking, Robichaud noted. (See table below.)

Robichaud emphasized that the mining industry is in fact contributing to the region’s economy, but its impact is small.

For many KRG councillors, seeing the numbers on paper only served to emphasize high poverty rates and scarce economic opportunities available for Nunavik’s Inuit during the Feb. 24 presentation.

“When you talk about economic development, even if [Inuit] want to, they don’t have the money to move forward,” said Charlie Arngak, a regional councillor for Kangiqsujuaq.

“Construction companies have partnered with Inuit and they’re making lots of money. But Inuit should be their own bosses. They don’t benefit nearly as much as they should.”

Other regional leaders say Nunavik’s latest economic portrait is an important tool to use when negotiating new agreements with governments or private businesses.

“I know some people say ‘When are we going to stop being researched?’ but we need

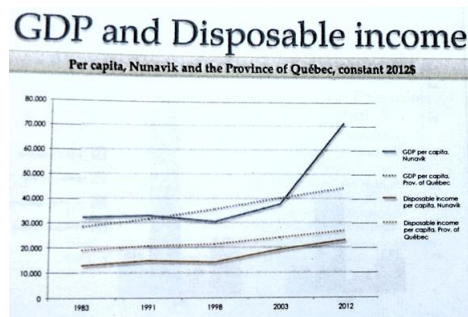
these tools to understand our situation, and we need to have up to date data,” said KRG chair Maggie Emudluk.

Robichaud’s presentation also tracked government spending in Nunavik between 2003 and 2012.

In 2013, the federal government paid out \$98 million to the region, while Quebec paid \$264 million.

By 2012, that had risen to \$131 in federal contributions and \$534 million in provincial funding.

Nunavik’s most recent economic portrait should soon be available to the public at the region’s statistics program website Nunivaat.org.



This graph shows the GDP and disposable income in both Nunavik and Quebec.

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunaviks_gdp_rising_but_inuit_not_getting_wealthier_study/

Aboriginal Politics

Global Voices: Nunavut reflects on its first 15 years

Marc and Craig Kielburger / .
February 20, 2015 05:58 PM



Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his wife, Laureen, walk with University of Victoria president Jamie Cassels and Ocean Networks Canada president and CEO Kate Moran in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, August, 2014. Photograph By Adrian Wyld, The Canadian Press

The second hand ticked toward midnight. Around the table the atmosphere was tense. High-level representatives from the federal government were wavering. It was the make or break moment for a deal that would change the face of Canada.

On that night in July, 1993, the government of Canada still balked at the idea of giving Inuit people their own self-governed land. But with midnight looming it relented, signing an historic agreement that resolved a swath of Inuit land claims and led to the founding — 15 years ago — of a new Canadian territory: Nunavut. Today, a generation of school children have never known a Canada without Nunavut.

Earlier this month, Inuit leaders and others gathered in Ottawa to look back at the past 15 years and, more importantly, discuss Nunavut's future. With pressure growing to resolve many outstanding aboriginal treaty issues across Canada, it's worth looking at the Nunavut experience.

We spoke to some of the people who helped Nunavut come into existence about the territory's successes and challenges, and what lies ahead. Paul Quassa is Nunavut's education minister, but 15 years ago he was the Inuit chief negotiator. Terry Audla helped establish the new Nunavut government in 1999. He now heads Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, a national Inuit organization.

For Quassa and Audla, the great strength and success of the Nunavut agreement was giving Inuit control over their land and affairs.

"We have Inuit ministers, making our own legislation that is Nunavut relevant," Quassa said.

With this, Inuit created a system that better reflected their culture and traditional values. For example, Audla noted how the Nunavut parliament legislates by consensus, eschewing the adversarial partisan model of Canada's other federal and provincial governments.

Like most aboriginal communities across Canada, Nunavut still faces a host of social and developmental issues: high unemployment and school dropout rates, and one of the highest suicide rates in the world.

Walking through a grocery store in Iqaluit, we experienced sticker shock at the astronomic food prices. We were warmly welcomed into tiny homes bursting at the rafters with people because of Nunavut's chronic housing shortage.

However, with self-government, Quassa and Audla say Nunavut is better empowered to tackle these challenges than many other aboriginal communities. For example, to engage youth in education and reduce drop-out rates, the territory is using its power to "Nunavutize" the school curriculum, incorporating Inuit culture, history and language into education.

With greater governmental control over the land, they believe Nunavut's Inuit people are also better placed than other aboriginal communities to manage natural resources, such as diamonds, ensuring they are developed sustainably and that Inuit communities benefit economically. Nunavut Premier Peter Taptuna told us he holds out great hope that Nunavut's vast mineral resources will bring new opportunities. "We are on the cusp of economic growth that is projected to outpace much of Canada," he predicted.

While Nunavut must lead in addressing its own challenges, the rest of Canada can provide support. Quassa and Audla both drew parallels to the development of the Canadian railway in the 1800s. If "Arctic sovereignty" — which has become a catchphrase in Canadian politics — is a national priority today, as Western expansion was back then, they argue it's time to drive new transportation links northward. "Canada was built by connecting from coast to coast (East to West.) Now we're coast to coast to coast," Quassa said.

And Canada needs to live up to the commitments it makes to Nunavut. In an ongoing case, it has taken the federal government to court for breaking a promise to help monitor the territory's economic, social and environmental progress.

Inuit leaders admit their territory is still young, coping with growing pains. There is a long road ahead to address issues including economic opportunity. The years to come will be a lesson for all Canada on the power of self-government to tackle the challenges facing our aboriginal people.

This is the last in a four-part series on aboriginal people and issues.

Brothers Craig and Marc Kielburger founded a platform for social change that includes the international charity, Free The Children, the social enterprise, Me to We, and the youth empowerment movement, We Day.

- See more at: <http://www.timescolonist.com/life/global-voices-nunavut-reflects-on-its-first-15-years-1.1770248#sthash.HAKasqp4.dpuf>

Indigenous activists opposing Energy East don't fear proposed anti-terror bill

[National News](#) | 4 hours ago by [Trina Roache](#) |



Trina Roache

APTN National News

HALIFAX—Indigenous grassroots leaders say the Harper government's anti-terrorism Bill C-51 won't stop their opposition to the Energy East pipeline.

The proposed bill would give more power to law enforcement authorities and Canada's spy agency to counter perceived terrorism threats.

Critics have raised concerns over aspects of the bill, including allowing police to execute "preventative" arrests if authorities suspect a terrorist plot "may be carried out." Critics also argue that the bill, by criminalizing the promotion of terrorism, threatens free speech.

The bill also includes "interference with critical infrastructure" and economy as part of what could be constituted as a terrorist threat.

Indigenous activists wonder what that will mean for future protests and blockades of the proposed pipeline, which will cut through 180 First Nations.

"I think Bill C-51 represents how desperate this government is," said Clayton Thomas-Muller, Co-Director of the Indigenous Tar Sands Campaign. "The extremes they'll go to, to deal with the incredible resurgence and energy of Indigenous movements in this country. I'm not afraid of it. Absolutely not."

The bill passed second reading in the House of Commons Monday evening with the support of the Liberal party.

At the same time Conservative and Liberal MPs stood to support the bill, over 100 people came out to Dalhousie University in Halifax to hear Indigenous leaders and activists talk about their plans to stop the Energy East pipeline.

Judy DaSilva, an Anishnabe activist from Grassy Narrows, told the audience about her fight against clear-cut logging. She knows how vital it is to protect water. Her community in northwestern Ontario lives with the effects of mercury poisoning from a nearby pulp mill.

DaSilva fears potential spills from the 4,600 km pipeline, which will stretch from the Alberta to New Brunswick. It will carry 1.1 million barrels of crude oil a day, increasing tar sands production, a corner stone in the Harper government's economic plan despite the crash in oil prices.

The proposed anti-terrorism bill won't stop DaSilva from protesting.

"We feel like the law coming out of parliament, it's nothing to us," said DaSilva. "To Indigenous people it's nothing compared to the law of the creator. If we do direct action, we can't have that fear of Bill C-51, we just got to have our feet, our moccasins, on the ground, to feel the power of mother earth, that's who we're protecting. The laws? I don't understand them, I don't believe in them, I don't listen to them."

Thomas-Muller points out since Harper gutted the Fisheries and Environment Acts, Indigenous rights play a key role in protecting land and water.

"Indigenous resistance is the last bastion against ravaging the environment," said Thomas-Muller. "In New Brunswick, there's now a moratorium against fracking. Direct action works it's effective. There's a lot of lessons to be learned from that struggle."

Mi'kmaw activist Shelley Young was part of those fracking protests near the Elsipogtog First Nation. She wonders how it would have played out differently if the terrorism legislation had existed then.

"There would be many more of us in jail, many more of us attacked," said Young.

The media images of burned-out RCMP cars and reports of violence didn't reflect what it was like on the ground, said Young.

"It was a very positive thing, what you saw in the news, didn't reflect what was happening there. We drummed, we laughed. It was beautiful," she said.

The bill does allow for lawful protests. But whether it's over fracking or pipelines, blockades can be seen by government as disrupting the economy or infrastructure.

Bill C-51 doesn't define terrorism, and that's one of the criticisms NDP leader Tom Mulcair has raised. He calls aspects of the bill vague.

Mulcair was in Halifax Monday and met with environmental groups and First Nations leaders to talk about how the bill will impact future protests.

"With regard to Peter MacKay our justice minister," said Mulcair. "I asked him several times last week give me one example of what you mean when you say that you're going to be going after these groups to disrupt them, what does that mean concretely, they can't give an answer."

Harper said Indigenous groups are right in their concern over the proposed bill.

"The groups are correctly concerned that they could be in the crosshairs of Mr. Harper in this plan," he said.

The NDP Leader said police already have the tools to fight security threats.

"Yes, we're going to oppose this bill, we're going to vote against it, we're going to fight it every step of the way," he said.

That could prove to be an uphill battle. With Liberal support, Bill C-51 passed second reading with a vote of 176-87 and will now go to the Steering Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/02/24/indigenous-activists-opposing-energy-east-dont-fear-proposed-anti-terror-bill/>

Premier Greg Selinger gets earful from First Nations leaders

Premier pledges to meet with chiefs in future

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 24, 2015 4:14 PM CT Last Updated: Feb 24, 2015 7:00 PM CT

Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger faced sharp criticism on Tuesday at the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs' annual general assembly of chiefs at Brokenhead Ojibway First Nation.

Selinger was there for three hours to talk about the province's progress implementing the recommendations from the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry and to take questions from the First Nations leaders.

But some chiefs were unhappy Selinger limited the number of questions chiefs could ask.



O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation Chief of South Indian Lake Chris Baker said chiefs need more time to discuss poverty, social issues, and Manitoba hydro concerns with the premier. Selinger did agree to meet with them in the future. (CBC)

O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation Chief Chris Baker of South Indian Lake said he was not happy the premier was there for such a short period of time.

He said he would have liked Selinger to hear more of what the chiefs had to say at the general assembly, but he also wanted a separate meeting over a full day or two with the premier and his cabinet to discuss poverty, social issues, and Manitoba Hydro concerns.

"The resources that are being extracted and taken away from us, and the opportunities, the training and the education that we talk about — why can't we sit down and get a commitment from the province?" Baker said at the meeting.

Selinger agreed to further meetings with the chiefs involving his cabinet.



Manto Sipi Cree Nation Chief Michael Yellowback said he is worried about the band constable program. The province is taking it over as federal funding runs out in April. (CBC)

Manto Sipi Cree Nation Chief Michael Yellowback voiced his concerns about the province taking over the band constable program.

Federal funding for the program runs out in April.

Yellowback said he's worried about the impact of that on training, equipment, and facilities.

More than 40 chiefs have travelled to the South Beach Casino at the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, about an hour north of Winnipeg, to attend the meetings.

They will also discuss gaming and casino revenue sharing and the roundtable that takes place in Ottawa this week on missing and murdered indigenous women.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/premier-greg-selinger-gets-earful-from-first-nations-leaders-1.2970100>

Fighting words: NDP MP takes aim at Indigenous Liberal candidates over anti-terrorism bill

[National News](#) | 2 days ago by [Jorge Barrera](#) | [4 Comments](#)



Jorge Barrera
APTN National News

Indigenous Liberal candidates endorse a threat against Aboriginal rights by supporting Liberal leader Justin Trudeau's decision to back the Harper government's anti-terror bill through the House of Commons, says Cree NDP MP Romeo Saganash.

The Harper government's proposed Bill C-51 passed second reading in the House of Commons Monday with votes from Conservative and Liberal MPs. The proposed bill will now go to a parliamentary committee for study.

The government is [reportedly trying to impose a limit of three days for committee hearings](#) on the bill. The bill proposes to endow police-like powers onto Canada's spy agency and give police more leeway in determining when to counter perceived threats. Another measure proposed by the bill includes a crack-down on speech on-line interpreted as promoting terrorism.

The NDP is opposing the bill.

The Liberal party has stated it will vote in support of the bill's passage through the House of Commons, but promises to change it if they manage to form the next federal government.

Saganash said the bill poses a threat to assertions of Aboriginal rights enshrined in section 35 of the Constitution.

"How many times has Canada considered, whenever we protested to defend our rights or have them recognized, how many times have they considered that legitimate or lawful?" said Saganash. "They have always used police authorities and force against us, against that kind of dissent."

Saganash said he has a "difficult time understanding" how Indigenous Liberal candidates can back Trudeau's decision to have his MPs vote for the bill and still support Aboriginal rights.

"I would never allow any government or any party say, 'let's forget about Aboriginal rights in this case, even if there are serious threats, and we'll deal with it when we come into power,'" said Saganash. "That is unacceptable for me, for someone who has fought for Aboriginal rights and treaty rights...never would I accept someone saying we can set aside section 35 rights for the moment."

[Saganash recently took to Twitter on the issue to challenge](#) two nominated Indigenous Liberal candidates, Jody Wilson-Raybould, who is running for a seat in Vancouver, and Robert-Falcon Ouellette, who is running in Winnipeg. Saganash also challenged [former Native Women's Association president Michele Audette](#), who is seeking the Liberal nomination in Quebec's Manicougan riding.

"C-51 Real threat to S.35 Rights, why are the #LPC Abo Candidates so silent?" tweeted Saganash on Saturday.

Ouellette and Audette were the only ones to respond directly to Saganash.

Ouellette responded [Tuesday with a Facebook post essentially repeating Liberal talking points](#) on the bill, including how it needed a sunset clause, more oversight and that a Liberal government would make things right.

In an interview with *APTN National News*, Ouellette paused for a moment before answering a question on whether he could stomach voting for the bill if he was an MP.

"Could I vote for it right now...if I was sitting in parliament? I don't know, I haven't got to that point yet," he said.

After some back and forth tweeting on Sunday with Saganash, Audette said she needed to study the issue more.

“I don’t have a team of lawyers to help me,” tweeted Audette.

“Same for me. But how can one be in favour of C-51 if one has defended fundamental rights all their life?” tweeted Saganash, in response.

“Well, pass the message on to your leader,” responded Audette.

“#MyPointExactly My leader is against, yours for! #MechanteDifference,” tweeted Saganash.

Saganash misspelled Wilson-Raybould’s twitter handle, but she also tweeted about the bill on Sunday.

“Slippery slope if legitimate political protest/dissent is interpreted as terrorism,” [tweeted Wilson-Raybould](#). “Who is watching the watchers? Oversight required #BillC51.”

A B.C. chiefs organization came out against the bill Friday.

“The Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs believes the sweeping scope of Bill C-51 directly violates the ability of all Indigenous peoples to exercise, assert and defend their constitutionally protected and judicially-recognized Indigenous title and rights to their respective territories,” said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, the president of the organization, in a statement.

Despite some controversy, the UBCIC has supported Wilson-Raybould’s decision to remain regional Assembly of First Nations chief while also a running as a Liberal.

Wilson-Raybould did not return *APTN*’s request for comment.

The RCMP and the Canadian Security Intelligence Agency (CSIS) routinely monitor Indigenous activists and protests.

As *APTN National News* has previously reported, the RCMP [keeps a file on prominent activist Clayton Thomas-Muller](#). *APTN* has also reported on [CSIS agents making contact with Indigenous activists to warn them off](#) protests or [to squeeze them for information about trips to foreign countries](#).

A recent analysis by lawyers with Toronto firm Olthuis Kleer Townshend found [that the proposed bill could give authorities “a blank cheque” to “stifle Indigenous dissent.”](#)

The analysis found Indigenous dissent could find itself in the cross-hairs as a result of the existing broad definition of terrorism coupled with the bill’s proposal to give police the

power to execute arrests simply on the belief that a terror act “may be carried out” instead of “will be carried out.”

The analysis used a road blockade, which is a common tactic in Indigenous protests, as an example.

“Under the new ‘may’ standard, the (police) officer might say to himself: ‘Might these people be intending to harm public safety? Maybe they intend to even block fire trucks from going through this route. If there is a fire in this area, the public will surely be in danger. I better start arresting people,’” said the analysis.

“We are not saying this is a reasonable interpretation. What we are saying is because of the vagueness, it is susceptible to unreasonable interpretation,” said Michael McClurg, one of the co-authors of the analysis, in an interview.

“For First Nations, the democratic channels of advocacy are generally not available because voters don’t pay attention, so the judiciary and direct action become more important for the assertion of section 35 rights,” said Senwung Luk, the other co-author of the analysis.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/02/25/fighting-words-ndp-mp-takes-aim-at-indigenous-liberal-candidates-over-anti-terrorism-bill/>

AFN fears ‘unjust labelling’ of First Nations activists as ‘terrorists’ under proposed anti-terror bill: document

[National News](#) | 2 days ago by [Jorge Barrera](#) |

Jorge Barrera

APTN National News

The Assembly of First Nations will be seeking to appear as a witness before the House of Commons committee currently studying the Harper government’s proposed anti-terror bill.

The AFN’s main concern is about its potential impact on First Nation dissent, according to a document from the national chiefs organization which analyzes Bill C-51.

To voice concerns about its potential impact on First Nation dissent, according to a document from the national chiefs organization which analyzes Bill C-51.

The AFN will also be seeking standing as a witness before the Senate committee taking over study of the anti-terror bill once it passes through the House of Commons, which is expected because the Harper government has a majority.

The AFN analysis document says the proposed bill could lead to the “unjust labelling of First Nations activists as ‘terrorists.’”

“Many of the provisions drafted in the proposed Act could potentially apply to activities of Indigenous peoples living in Canada and there are very few provisions proposed that would prevent the legislation from being interpreted against First Nations people,” said the analysis.

The AFN will also be seeking to meet with officials and MPs on both sides of the debate to have amendments considered in discussions on the proposed bill.

“Our office will seek to meet with government and opposition officials to seek amendments to the draft legislation,” according to the AFN’s analysis which was finalized Tuesday. “Our office will be working with First Nation leadership and interested organizations to assess the potential impacts of the legislation.”

The proposed anti-terror bill will give the Canadian Security Intelligence Agency police-like powers. It also gives police more leeway when it comes to arresting individuals suspected of committing acts of the terror. The bill also aims to crack-down on online speech that is perceived to promote terrorism.

The Harper government has rejected calls for more oversight to accompany the new powers the bill will give to law enforcement agencies.

The Liberals have stated they want amendments to the bill, but will support its passage even if their amendments are rejected.

[The NDP has stated](#) it intends to oppose the bill.

The AFN is among a list of 60 potential witnesses the NDP is planning to submit to the Commons Public Safety committee studying the bill. The NDP will also be including Indigenous activists on the list of potential witnesses.

It’s unclear at the moment when the committee will actually begin to hear from witnesses. On Tuesday, the Conservatives reportedly tried to limit the amount of days spent hearing witnesses while the NDP responded by filibustering, pushing the meeting to the four-hour mark.

The committee meets again in camera Thursday and NDP public safety critic Randall Garrison is expected to table a motion to have the committee sit during evenings and through break weeks to hear from as many witnesses as possible.

During question period Wednesday, NDP leader Thomas Mulcair accused the Harper government of trying to limit debate on the bill. He asked why Prime Minister Stephen Harper didn’t want to hear from First Nation leaders on their concerns about the bill. Mulcair quoted from a statement issued by the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs last Friday

which said the proposed anti-terror bill “directly violates the ability” of Indigenous people to assert and defend their constitutionally protected rights.

“First Nations are raising the alarm,” said Mulcair. “Again, Bill C-51 goes well beyond terrorism and will impact constitutionally-protected dissent and protest. Why is the prime minister afraid to hear from First Nations themselves?”

Harper wasn’t in the House of Commons for question period, but Public Safety Minister Steven Blaney fielded the question. Blaney said First Nations had nothing to fear from the bill.

“For greater certainty, it does not include lawful advocacy, protest, dissent and artistic expression,” said Blaney, quoting directly from the bill. “Please read the bill and then we can have a debate.”

The AFN analysis also references the same section Blaney used to argue First Nation dissent did not face a threat, but came to a different conclusion.

“Although most First Nations demonstrations could be considered as lawful advocacy, protest or dissent, it is likely that there would be disagreements between First Nations and the government as to what would constitute unlawful activity,” said the analysis. “The legislation does not account for disagreements or who would determine in the event of an ambiguous situation, such as if a demonstration was considered a lawful protest by a First Nation, but deemed an interference with critical infrastructure by the federal government or law enforcement agencies.”

The analysis also raises concerns about another section of the bill that covers activities that “undermines the security of Canada” including interfering with the government’s capabilities around defence, intelligence, border operations, public safety and the economic and financial stability of the country.

“This definition could be problematic for First Nations communities or citizens who may be engaged in various activities to: assert inherent or recognized rights and title; protect their land and water rights and interest; or oppose major development projects on their traditional lands that threaten the enjoyment of their Aboriginal or Treaty rights,” said the analysis. “The proposed legislation could result in the unjust labeling of First Nations activists as ‘terrorists,’ such activists who: seek to exercise their freedom of speech and freedom of assembly to assert First Nation’s collective rights, title and jurisdiction; march across or set up blockades at the border of the United States and Canada; set up a blockade along a major highway or railway; block access to a road or railway’ or publicly encourage such actions.”

The analysis also said the AFN was watching Bill C-639, An Act to Amend the Criminal Code, protection of critical infrastructure, which is a private member’s bill introduced by Conservative MP Wai Young last December. Bill C-639 aims to expand the Criminal

Code definitions of critical infrastructure to also encompass everything from telecommunications, to transportation to finance, health care and food, said the analysis.

“The critical infrastructure provision in (the Bill C-51) closely resembles...Bill C-639,” said the analysis. “Unlike Bill C-639...Bill C-51 is very broad and will embody any activity that ‘undermines the security of Canada.’”

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/02/26/afn-fears-unjust-labelling-first-nations-activists-terrorists-proposed-anti-terror-bill-document/>

Energy, the Environment & Natural Resources

First Nations going green

Embrace geothermal technology in big way

By: Alexandra Paul

Posted: 02/21/2015 3:00 AM |



A Manitoba Hydro meter is on the side of a newly built home powered by geothermal energy in Peguis First Nation.

Two Interlake First Nations host Manitoba's largest geothermal venture, a low-profile but high-impact investment that holds a promise to alter reserve life for the better.

More than 200 homes are already equipped with geothermal heat, one of the world's newest and arguably one of the world's most ancient sources of heating. Hundreds more will see their homes run off green energy, thanks to a partnership with Manitoba Hydro and its homeowner loans program.

Add to that commercial developments, including a 2,600-seat arena with a regulation-size ice surface on Peguis First Nation and a fitness centre and car wash in adjacent Fisher River, 220 kilometres north of Winnipeg.

Peguis Chief Glenn Hudson sees the project as a green-energy trailblazer with expertise and considerable savings on the reserve that could hold the key to fiscal independence.

"It's something we feel we have a responsibility as First Nations to promote... green energy, sustainable energy projects," said Hudson.

Geothermal heating systems borrow from the ancient Greeks and Chinese, who made use of hot springs.

It means tapping into ground-source heat below the frost line that stays a constant 5 C to 7 C and installing 600 metres of 3/4-inch pipe in a configuration of loops in trenches 2.1 metres deep. The pipes are connected to a heat pump above the ground a little bigger than a high-efficiency furnace, and a mixture of propylene glycol and water is passed through it. A refrigerator draws it off as steam and compresses it to create heat while a fan sends the heat through the house.

The mixture then recirculates back through the pipes and the process loops around again.

Hydro financed the startup, with some \$3.2 million worth of investment, \$2.2 million in the form of repayable homeowner loans. The overall \$18-million plan aims to install geothermal heating on First Nations over five years.

The ventures have created about two dozen jobs, expertise in a cutting-edge industry and the first source of safe, clean heat for Manitoba's First Nations after generations of relying on the wood-burning stoves behind many fatal reserve fires.

Hudson returned to Peguis more than a decade ago as an engineer with geothermal on his mind. He built his own home, installing the loops, pipes and heat pump five years ago, before Manitoba Hydro entered the picture, along with Aki Energy, a small First Nation social enterprise that acts as a broker and promotes sustainability on reserves. A partnership made the concept real.

"We spoke with Manitoba Hydro back about four years ago and met with the former CEO, Bob Brennan, and shared our ideas," Hudson said. "They felt it was a great initiative to be part of their Power Smart program, but also to be an initiative on its own, about jobs and opportunities."

The cost savings are impressive.

Heating bills typically soar to \$600 a month in winter in the average 1,800-square-foot bungalow. With geothermal? The bills drop to \$200 a month, including loan payment.

"The \$18 million is part of our Power Smart enhancement program, from 2013 to 2018 and Fisher River and Peguis were a pilot," Manitoba Hydro spokesman Scott Powell said.

Consultants call it the largest such venture, not just in Manitoba, but possibly in the country, further enhanced by solar-panel installations to heat hot-water tanks on Peguis.

The first meeting to kick-start the project happened about the same time the province introduced the Manitoba Energy Savings Act, allowing Manitoba Hydro to roll out a pay-as-you-go loan program.

Installing geothermal costs \$23,000 on average per home, but Aki Energy reduced that figure to about \$15,000. Solar-panel installation costs of \$3,500 were cut from down from \$8,000 -- bringing the technology within reach of First Nations.

"On the geothermal program, for instance, we work with First Nations to install the systems to first lower their heating bills, second to create employment and third to assist them in creating a business. That can include anything to do with alternative energy that's green," Aki executive director Darcy Wood said.

Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/first-nations-going-green-293162021.html>

Canadian First Nations Seek to Protect Forest Homeland

By winning protection for their boreal forest, indigenous peoples help slow global warming.



Ed Hudson and his crew clear a path to a neighboring village using 1948 Bombardier snowcats. Now under construction, a permanent all-weather road connecting Poplar River to Winnipeg will soon end Poplar River First Nation's isolation.

By **Edwin Dobb**, for National Geographic
Photographs by **Greg Girard**, for National Geographic

PUBLISHED February 24, 2015

He didn't mention his name, only that he was 62 years old and belonged to the [Poplar River First Nation](#), indigenous people who live on the east shore of Lake Winnipeg, in Manitoba.

Then he talked about his childhood. When he was seven, he was separated from his family and sent to a Christian boarding school far from his village. He wasn't allowed to speak Ojibwa, his native language, and risked punishment for so much as mentioning a traditional prayer or ceremony.

At the mercy of the teachers and administrators, he says, he was beaten and abused. He endured cold, hunger, medical neglect. Only when he was 14 did he see his parents again. Everything that had stood for home was now foreign.

"I didn't recognize my mother," he explained. "I stayed with my auntie."

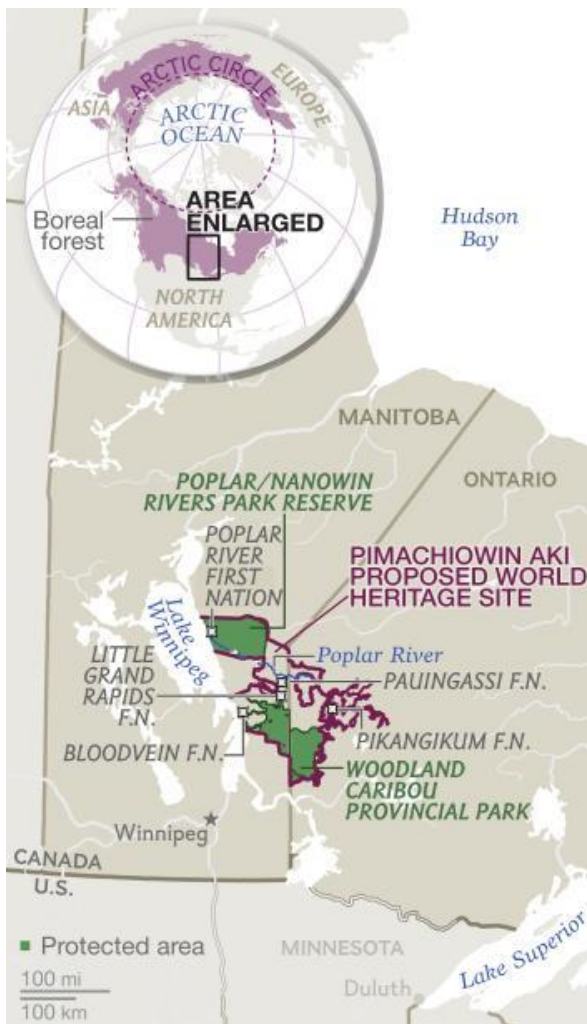
Such stories are common among indigenous peoples of Canada, known as the [First Nations](#). In recent years they have begun to talk openly—through an official [truth and reconciliation](#) process—about the effects of a long-standing national assimilation policy.

Between the late 19th century and the mid-1990s, when the last "residential" school closed, tens of thousands of indigenous boys and girls across Canada were routinely abused—to "kill the Indian in the child," as one official had put it.



Poplar River elder John Charles McDonald, 74, carries rabbits he caught in his family's traps. Under the band's new management plan, elders like McDonald will teach more young people how to trap, hunt, and fish commercially.

The truth and reconciliation process is part of a larger movement among the First Nations of Canada to force the government to honor treaties relating to indigenous sovereignty and to return control of ancestral land taken away during colonization. Much of the land in contention is wild, as well as rich in timber, oil and gas, and minerals. The traditional territory of the Poplar River First Nation, for example, is the size of Yellowstone Park and mostly undeveloped. Like other First Nations, the people of Poplar River want it to stay that way.



Consequently, the effort to regain control of ancestral land has become a potent environmental strategy, especially as the world's industrialized countries go to ever greater extremes to satisfy their appetite for natural resources. (Related: "[Naomi Klein on How Canada's First Nations Can Take on the Oil Industry and Win](#)")

Renewing ties to the land, says [Sophia Rabliauskas](#), of the Poplar River First Nation, is the only way "to keep the heart going, to keep the flame from dying out." The way that aspiration has played out in the Poplar River and neighboring communities east of Lake Winnipeg—the [Bloodvein First Nation](#), [Little Grand Rapids First Nation](#), and [Pauingassi First Nation](#)—has inadvertently placed them in the vanguard of the definitive environmental battle of our time.

That's because that territory encompasses a vast section of unspoiled [boreal forest](#)—a crucial front in the campaign to slow climate change. If the trees are left standing, and the soil undisturbed, the immense amounts of carbon they contain won't be released into the atmosphere as heat-producing carbon dioxide.

But becoming part of a global campaign wasn't on the minds of Sophia Rabliauskas and other Poplar River leaders when they started trying to reclaim the place they simply call the "bush."

Their aim was as simple as it was bold—to become the guardians of their traditional territory. To that end they created a land management and conservation plan while recruiting their First Nations neighbors to join them in what has been a decades-long endeavor.

Eventually, in 2011, the provincial government relented, giving the Poplar River First Nation control over an area known as the [Poplar/Nanowin Rivers Park Reserve](#).

The reserve, home to most of the band's 1,700 members, covers only 3,800 acres, but the Poplar River First Nation's historic territory stretches eastward from the lake almost to the Ontario border—about two million acres of lowland forest and bog, or muskeg, that the provincial government officially considered unoccupied as recently as the 1990s.



Willard Bittern and his dog Buster stand on the edge of a beaver dam pond that has flooded a stand of poplar trees. The trees and soil in the boreal forest contain immense amounts of carbon.

Now the people of Poplar River and their three neighbors in southeastern Manitoba—along with [Pikangikum First Nation](#) in northwestern Ontario and representatives of two provincial parks—are pressing UNESCO to designate their combined territory as a World Heritage site.

They call the region, which is the size of Belgium and straddles the Manitoba-Ontario border, [Pimachiowin Aki](#)—"land that gives life."

If approved, Pimachiowin Aki would be recognized for its world-class significance as both a cultural site and a natural site—a rare distinction.

The Spark for Action

"We had to prove we're here," Rabliauskas says, referring to the challenge of winning a measure of sovereignty over their land.

One incident in particular underscored how important that proof would become, and it involved Ed Hudson, a community leader.

During the early 1980s, Hudson and his mother's uncle were following a creekside beaver trapline when they came upon No Trespassing signs nailed to trees on both sides of the stream.

With the government's blessing, outsiders had built fishing and hunting lodges between Lake Winnipeg and the Ontario border.

Being told not to enter traditional Poplar River territory infuriated Hudson, then in his early 30s. Not one to back down from a fight, he wanted to destroy the signs, then pay a visit to those who had posted them.

But the older man advised his apprentice to be patient. "He always said to be respectful, to work within the law," Hudson explains. "We're still the Queen's Indians," he adds in jest, referring to Canada's symbolic relationship to the British monarchy.

Following discussions with provincial conservation officers, the signs were removed, and a confrontation avoided.



Ernest C. Bruce runs one of several Poplar River rapids as he heads upriver for a weekend in the bush with family members. "Our spiritual values come from the land," says his neighbor Ray Rabliauskas.

But the implications of the incident and others like it were clear—at least to the Poplar River elders. "They told us people would come for our resources," Hudson says, "that we had to prepare."

Exhibiting an unusual degree of foresight and political savvy, the elders, most of whom have since died, urged the band to collect individual stories and record the history of the community, showing how the people had used—and continued to use—their ancestral lands.

They advised that this be done in a way that would satisfy officials in Winnipeg, which is to say, in written English—no easy task for people who still relied on oral traditions and for whom the province's majority language was largely foreign.

"No one knew what a land management plan was," Hudson says, "but that's how it started."

The first plan was modest, limited to a swath of forest from the village 25 miles upstream, and extending only five miles from the Poplar River on each side. The plan included a request that traditional traplines be respected.

How the government responded, after getting over the shock of a First Nation claiming provincial territory outside its officially recognized reserve, revealed a deep cultural divide.



Edward Franklin, 21, and Karl Berens, 19, attend a spiritual retreat at Weaver Lake, in Manitoba. By regaining sovereignty over ancestral land, Poplar River leaders have created a permanent legacy for generations to come.

"We'll allow you to lease the area," officials said. In other words, pay for something you already own—if, that is, indigenous people viewed ownership in such terms.

"The land doesn't belong to us," Hudson says. "It belongs to our children." The Poplar River leaders withdrew but didn't give up.

Sovereignty Through Solidarity

There then followed a remarkable chapter in the life of the people of Poplar River, as well as their First Nation neighbors—one whose ending has yet to be written but which has already inspired other indigenous groups, such as the Maori, in New Zealand, and the Fiji islanders.

The Poplar River band continued working on their land management plan, never doubting that the area should be controlled by the people who had lived there for 6,000 years.

Meanwhile, environmental groups launched a campaign to preserve the world's boreal forests, which cover most of Alaska, Canada, and Scandinavia, as well as much of Russia.

Canada seemed especially promising because a great deal of its original forest remained intact. Some 1,500 scientists from countries around the world petitioned the Canadian

government to protect at least half of its boreal and to closely manage development on the rest.

With the technical and financial help of organizations like the [Pew Charitable Trusts](#) and the [Natural Resources Defense Council](#), the Poplar River First Nation enlisted archaeologists, biologists, and other experts in its cause.

"We compiled lots of data, as they call it," Hudson says.

The band also hired Ray Rabliauskas, Sophia's husband, a non-native resident of Poplar River whose familiarity with both English and Ojibwa made him an ideal go-between during the many meetings that took place in Winnipeg.

Ray, Sophia, Hudson, and others returned again and again to the capital to argue for sovereignty. "I really enjoyed those days," says Hudson, who readily admits that, like his compatriots, he was learning on the job.

Even so, it appears that the government was often one step behind Poplar River, failing to appreciate the growing sophistication of the leaders, who saw themselves as doing nothing more than obeying the last wishes of their elders.

They moved closer to fulfilling that pledge in 1999, when Manitoba granted temporary—five-year—protection to Poplar River's entire historic territory.

In effect, the decision was a ban on all forms of development the Poplar River community deemed undesirable: No commercial logging, no mining, no dams, no power line corridor connecting hydroelectric projects in the northern part of the province to urban areas in the south—all of which the government had previously considered.

Whether the interim status would become permanent was far from certain, however. Nor was there a guarantee that Poplar River would exercise real control over the region. And both worried Hudson and the others, who were growing increasingly concerned about young people leaving the reserve. "More would stay," he says, "if there were more to stay for."



On a cool summer morning, Willard Bittern enjoys his first cigarette and cup of coffee. The one-room cabin, upstream of Poplar River, is a frequent destination for Bittern and his relatives.

Despite the uncertainty, the region's people set their sights even higher. Near the time the provincial government granted temporary protection, the First Nations met in Little Grand Rapids to discuss several issues, including applying for their territory to become a [UNESCO](#) World Heritage site: Pimachiowin Aki.

Soon they forged a cooperative stewardship accord saying they would work together to regain sovereignty and preserve their territory.

"The more intertwined it is," Sophia Rabliauskas had said during the lakeside spiritual retreat in 2010, "the stronger it becomes."

After the five First Nations signed the accord, Hudson, Sophia and Ray Rabliauskas, and other representatives of Pimachiowin Aki met with leaders of both the Ontario and Manitoba governments.

That led to the inclusion of two parks—one in each of the provinces—creating a continuous, mostly wild region that stretched across 40,000 square miles, all of it ancestral Ojibwa land.

Building Roads and Going Online

Before that fateful day when Ed Hudson found No Trespassing signs on a family trapline, the village of Poplar River had been accessible only by boat and plane.

The community subsequently built a road from the village southward for about 90 miles, paralleling Lake Winnipeg. During the winter, a maintenance crew plowed a path from the end of the road five miles across the ice to Pine Dock, a fishing outpost on the west side of the lake that's connected by highway to Winnipeg.

Eventually trucks replaced snow machines, ATVs, and canoes as the primary mode of transportation on the reserve, and roads and bridges were built to accommodate them.

Winter shopping trips that initially focused on necessities soon expanded to luxury items like TVs and computers. Today more than a hundred Poplar River homes have Internet service.

What remains of Poplar River's isolation won't last much longer. In their blueprint for the future, the elders asked Hudson and his contemporaries to include a year-round, all-weather road to extend the winter section all the way down the east side of the lake to Winnipeg.

"They told us the kids would need it," says Sophia Rabliauskas. "Just not in my lifetime!" she adds with a laugh. In 2007, Rabliauskas was awarded a prestigious [Goldman Environmental Prize](#) for the groundbreaking work she and her Poplar River neighbors had done on behalf of indigenous sovereignty and forest conservation, including convincing the Manitoba government to extend interim protection—if necessary until 2014.

It wasn't. In June 2011, after a nerve-racking 12-year wait, Manitoba decided to protect in perpetuity all of the Poplar River First Nation's traditional territory.

Now, for the first time since European settlement, their homeland was under their own control.

That left one more step in realizing the vision of the elders—the designation of Pimachiowin Aki, which would increase the protected area fivefold. Once again, without intending to do so, tiny indigenous communities in a remote part of Canada found themselves in the forefront of global change.

The Canadian government, on behalf of the First Nations and provincial parks partners, submitted the World Heritage site nomination in January 2012. The following year, during its annual session, in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, the World Heritage Committee confounded everyone back in Canada by voting to defer the nomination.

Why?

The committee realized that the UNESCO evaluation criteria were flawed. Although they'd approved a small number of so-called "mixed" sites before, they'd never dealt with one so large, nor, more importantly, one in which the cultural aspect of the site was not embodied in a major structure, like a cathedral.

Poplar River and partners had proposed something very familiar to them but alien to UNESCO: What makes Pimachiowin Aki worthy of heritage site status is not its natural or cultural elements as separate entities but rather the special bond between the two.

To Canada's First Nations, indeed, and to aboriginal people everywhere, the notion that culture exists apart from nature is a kind of madness that's at the root of our environmental troubles.



Kids hang out in the place they call "downtown" Poplar River. The sole school in the village goes only to ninth grade. Students must leave the reserve to attend high school, usually in faraway Winnipeg, yet another threat to cultural survival.

During the 2014 meeting of the World Heritage Committee, held in Doha, Qatar, one of the committee advisers referred to the Pimachiowin Aki experience as a "traumatic process that asked some fundamental questions about how we work ... particularly in territories of indigenous people."

The committee agreed, voting to review, at the next annual session, this coming summer, the way such nominations are evaluated. Poplar River and the other First Nations resubmitted their proposal on January 28.

A final decision on Pimachiowin Aki is expected in summer 2016.

Meanwhile, the people of Poplar River have been implementing the management plan the government approved in 2011.

A new trapping policy, aimed at maintaining beaver and other populations, is being developed. Looking to tourism and recreation as a source of revenue, the reserve now issues fishing licenses to outsiders. And community members are discussing ways to create jobs—in education and conservation, for instance—making it possible for youngsters to find well-paying, meaningful work in Poplar River. "We have to get

ecology into the classroom," Ray Rabliauskas says. "We have to get kids back into the bush."

And if the allure of the outside world proves irresistible to the next generation, the area will nevertheless retain its character—as a cultural sanctuary the First Nations people can always return to and, as a bonus to us all, a natural preserve that will help counter the dangers of global climate change. Two aims—one local, the other global—braided together.

But neither would be possible without sovereignty. "Our spiritual values come from the land," Ray Rabliauskas says. "Having the land makes it real."

Direct Link: <http://news-beta.nationalgeographic.com/2015/02/150224-poplar-river-first-nation-ojibwa-manitoba-global-warming-conservation/>

First Nations fight feds over decision to open herring-roe fisheries

By Jennifer Saltman, The Province February 24, 2015



Fishermen watch as herring are pumped onto a fishing tender off the west coast.

Three coastal B.C. First Nations are once again fighting the federal government's decision to open herring roe fisheries in their areas, arguing fish stocks have not recovered enough to permit commercial fishing.

It's the second year in a row the Nuu-chah-nulth, Heiltsuk and Haida have voiced their opposition to commercial fishing of spawning herring and roe collected on kelp.

"It's unfortunate that we have this again — the fight with the department and the fight with industry," said Dr. Don Hall, fisheries program manager for the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council.

The Nuu-chah-nulth are heading to federal court on Thursday to seek an injunction to stop the fishery from opening on the west coast of Vancouver Island. In early March, the Haida Nation will also apply for an injunction to stop herring fishing around Haida Gwaii.

The herring fisheries on the west coast of Vancouver Island, central coast and Haida Gwaii were closed for about 10 years because stocks were below acceptable levels, but Fisheries Minister Gail Shea decided to open them last year based on her department's assessments, but against the advice of her staff.

First Nations and scientists questioned the science behind the decision, but were unsuccessful in convincing Shea to reverse herself.

"We were shocked they would open herring fishing considering what the numbers say," said Peter Lantin, president of the Haida Nation. "The numbers still haven't increased and there's no indication that the herring stocks are rebuilding or on the path to rebuilding."

Intense negotiations in early 2014 produced a verbal agreement between the Council of the Haida Nation and the Herring Industry Advisory Board to not conduct a commercial roe herring fishery in Haida waters that year. The Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council was able to get a federal court injunction in February 2014 to successfully stop the fishery in their territory.

The Heiltsuk Tribal Council planned to take their protest to the water and to physically block fishermen from catching herring and harvesting roe. It didn't come to that, however, and fishermen caught their quota in the least sensitive areas. The Heiltsuk will not go to court this year, instead continuing to try negotiating with the government and industry.

"We felt that this approach too should also be something that would be supported, to sit down and talk," said Marilyn Slett, chief councillor with the Heiltsuk Tribal Council.

The goal for all three first nations is to convince the federal government to look at the evidence and keep the herring fisheries closed in their areas — herring remain abundant in the Strait of Georgia and Prince Rupert — until there are enough fish to support commercial fishing. They would also like to work with the government to manage the fisheries, which they believe have been badly managed thus far.

"Going forward we're not against commercial fishing," said Slett. "We have people who have made livings doing that, but we have that larger responsibility around stewardship."

Herring — the roe of which is mostly exported overseas when caught commercially — are extremely significant to local first nations. Roe on kelp is a delicacy that is part of their heritage and traditions, and the fish is important to the ecosystem.

“It’s a very deep spiritual, cultural, physical connection to herring,” said Hall.

To preserve this important fish, they’re willing to pull out all the stops: negotiating, appealing, going to the courts and finally physically keeping fishermen out of their territory.

“Maybe it’ll take extreme circumstances to facilitate change and we’ll see how the rest plays out,” said Lantin. “It’s just frustrating because we did this last year. It feels like Groundhog Day.”

This year, the first nations also have the support of the union representing fishermen.

In an open letter, Kim Olsen, president of the United Fishermen & Allied Workers Union, recommended that commercial herring fishermen not select either Haida Gwaii or the central coast as their herring areas for the 2015 season.

“Over the last four decades access to fish and fisheries has become separated from fishermen and adjacent coastal communities. Continued disintegrated management on our coast is simply unacceptable,” Olsen wrote.

According to an email from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the 2015 opening is “based on science and follows the precautionary approach.”

It said forecasts have shown that herring stock numbers continue to support modest commercial harvest opportunities while meeting conservation objectives.

Direct Link:

<http://www.theprovince.com/First+Nations+fight+feds+over+decision+open+herring+fisheries/10836983/story.html>

Nunatsiavut president Sarah Leo 'quite disturbed' over Vale agreement

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 25, 2015 9:40 AM NT Last Updated: Feb 25, 2015 9:40 AM NT



Vale will pay \$200 million in compensation over four years to the Newfoundland and Labrador government in exchange for being able to process nickel concentrate outside the province. (Vale/Canadian Press)

The Inuit government in Labrador isn't happy with the announcement of changes to the Voisey's Bay agreement, which will allow Vale to continue exporting unprocessed ore from the massive nickel mine.

Nunatsiavut president Sarah Leo said the Newfoundland and Labrador government was required to consult the Inuit because the mine is on land connected to their land agreement with the provincial and federal governments.

"We should've been consulted — I mean, it's in our backyard. It's right here," she said.



Nunatsiavut president Sarah Leo is questioning why they were not consulted before the new Voisey's Bay agreement. (CBC)

"We have a land claims agreement that specifically has a chapter dedicated to the Voisey's Bay project," Leo told CBC News.

"So, it's very important to us that we have an understanding and are involved in what's happening with the project."

On Tuesday, Natural Resources Minister Derrick Dalley and Vale VP Stuart Macnaughton announced that they were amending the Voisey's Bay Development Agreement to allow the company to send nickel concentrate from the mine in Labrador to Ontario and Manitoba for processing.

The delay is connected to delays in completing Vale's massive processing facility in Long Harbour, in Newfoundland's Placentia Bay.

Learned of extension from news release

Leo said she found out about the agreement the same way everyone else did, when the release came out.

"I was quite disturbed that this amendment was being made," she said.

"Under our agreement, anything that's going on with regards to Voisey's Bay, especially where the governments are concerned, the Nunatsiavut is expected to be consulted."

She feels the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement, which was signed by the province as well as the Government of Canada, requires that the Inuit in Labrador should have been involved in the discussions with Vale.

"They're aware of the provisions in there and we expect them to be followed," she told CBC News.

She said they should be part of the process because the Long Harbour project is directly tied to what's happening in Labrador.

"Without Voisey's Bay, Long Harbour wouldn't exist," she said.

The amendment comes in light of delays in the construction of the Long Harbour nickel processing plant, which began in 2009. The project has fallen behind schedule because of labour challenges.

Vale will pay \$200 million over four years in compensation to the Newfoundland and Labrador government, and will contribute another \$30 million to a community fund.

Ball nervous about how \$200M will be spent

Liberal Leader Dwight Ball said the Voisey's Bay Development Agreement, which was negotiated when his party was in power, is proving to be a good deal.



Liberal leader Dwight Ball says the government shouldn't use the money from Vale on election-style spending.

Despite that, he is worried about how the money will be spent, and is cautioning the government not to use the \$200 million from Vale to sway voters leading up to the next provincial election.

"Obviously everyone understands the environment we're into right now, which is an election year," he said.

"We certainly don't want to see corporate money and royalty money that was anticipated here — that was announced just spent simply by a government that wants to make election promises."

Long Harbour a 'work in progress': Michael

The leader of the provincial new democrats said the latest news from Vale raises questions about the Long Harbour nickel plant.



NDP leader Lorraine Michael says people expected to see the nickel processing plant in Long Harbour open by now.

Lorraine Michael said the good news is that despite the delays in getting the processing plant up and running, the plant is still employing 2,200 employees.

She's referring to the 1,500 workers involved in the construction of the plant and 700 employees involved in operations.

Despite those numbers, she is still surprised at the delays.

"People expected, when Long Harbour opened, to see something that was ready to go," she said.

"What we're finding out is that Long Harbour is really a work in progress. It's still a laboratory, it's still a testing area."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/nunatsiavut-president-sarah-leo-quite-disturbed-over-vale-agreement-1.2970751>

Calliou Group leads First Nations consultations

[David Parker, Calgary Herald More from David Parker, Calgary Herald](#)

Published on: February 26, 2015

Last Updated: February 26, 2015 6:00 AM MST



Tracy Campbell, principal at Calliou Group, a unique Aboriginal-owned firm specializing in Aboriginal consultation, support and advice, in her 16 Avenue N.W office.

When the environmental services company she worked for was taken over by Stantec in 2008, Tracy Campbell decided she would try working for herself and launched Calliou Group.

It was a gutsy move as she had to start from scratch during an economic downturn that would affect the resource companies she hoped would become her clients.

Co-workers Germaine Conacher and Adena Vanderjagt asked Campbell if they could join her and the three began their new venture in aboriginal consultation from the basement of Campbell's home.

It wasn't long before the growing business forced a move into a larger, leased space. They first took over an area that had been used as a massage parlour before moving into even larger premises.

Calliou Group will hold an open house reception Thursday night to show off their newest home, a 4,400-square-foot space on 16th Avenue N.W. and introduce the entire team of 15 professionals who provide First Nations' consultation services to the natural resource industry, First Nations and governments across Canada.

When any project crosses onto First Nations' lands, or surrounding Crown lands where aboriginals have hunting or fishing rights, it's mandatory a consultation process take place.

Campbell believes it's essential clients understand government regulations and aboriginal and treaty rights; contemporary activities that while rooted in historic practices and world views, are nonetheless part of a vibrant and continuous people's culture and ways of life.

They are not taught in our schools or universities so Calliou has written courses that can be offered to clients either orally or via its Aboriginal Consultation 101 course.

The course was developed by Bee Calliou Schaneck — affectionately known to everyone as Auntie Bee — using her own experiences, understanding, compassion and natural sense of humour. A consultant on Aboriginal matters to energy industry clients for many years, she also works with her niece Tracy at Calliou (a family name) primarily in the field of educating people about the history of Canadian Aboriginals and treaty rights.

The importance of the consultative process is made clear by projects like a case Calliou completed that meant negotiating with 50 different aboriginal groups across a number of provinces to gain approval of a right of way.

Campbell, a member of the Metis Nation of Alberta, took a multi-disciplinary graduate degree at the University of Calgary in law, geography and political science. Her company is fully aboriginal owned and its staff have a wide range of strengths and experiences in many fields that have proved vital to the company's success. They include employees with education and backgrounds in areas such as natural resource management environmental and sciences, law, anthropology and archeology and geography and GIS.

- straightforward, critical business message.

Direct Link: <http://calgaryherald.com/business/local-business/calliou-group-leads-first-nations-consultations>

Land Claims & Treaty Rights

Mikisew Cree chief sues for \$10 billion over land-claims settlement

By Marty Klinkenberg, Edmonton Journal February 21, 2015



Former Mikisew Cree chief Archie Waquan poses for a photo at his store, Chief's Corner, in Fort Chipewyan on Feb. 5, 2015. Waquan has filed a \$10-billion lawsuit on behalf of the band against a host of defendants, including the federal and Alberta governments.

EDMONTON - Former Mikisew Cree chief Archie Waquan has filed a \$10-billion lawsuit on behalf of the band against a host of defendants, including the federal and Alberta governments.

The lawsuit, filed Wednesday in Alberta's Court of Queen's Bench, attempts to set aside 2009 land-claim agreements that are alleged to have violated treaty rights.

The band's 3,000 members accepted payments of \$10,000 each without government lawyers explaining that they were giving up claim to land that contains billions of dollars of oil and gas leases, the statement of claim says.

The \$30-million payout grossly underestimates the value of the land, and was turned over without members being required to sign releases, or receiving copies of the agreement, the court document says.

A statement of claim contains allegations not proven in court. No statement of defence has been filed.

"The dispersal of \$30 million to the four winds without anyone thinking to obtain individual releases from people whose constitutionally protected rights were being 'settled and released' is something that the Auditor General of Canada will likely need to look into," Jeffrey Rath, the Calgary lawyer representing the plaintiffs, said Friday. "I have never seen a land-claim settlement so badly mishandled."

The lawsuit lists as defendants the Attorney General of Canada, former deputy minister of aboriginal affairs Michael Wernick, the Alberta government, and a half-dozen lawyers who conducted negotiations with band members while representing the federal and provincial governments.

According to the statement of claim, through the deals, Mikisew Cree members unknowingly signed away rights to about 194,000 hectares of land in the oilsands to which they are entitled as part of an agreement the band reached with the federal government in 1986.

In 2008, Rath and his partners settled a case on behalf of 250 members of the Prophet River (B.C.) First Nation for \$130 million related to oil and gas claims; in 2011, the federal and provincial governments reached a \$260-million settlement with Bigstone Cree Nation related to 56,600 hectares controlled by the band.

The lawsuit alleges that payments were made to Mikisew Cree members without consent from Waquan, without benefit from counsel, and without written copies of the agreements. The payments were offered at a time government lawyers were seeking to have a 1996 lawsuit dismissed that Waquan had filed over similar issues. Waquan contends he was never given notice when that prior action was dismissed in 2010.

The statement of claim also alleges that the federal government has not made reasonable efforts to protect the water quality in the Peace/Athabasca river delta, and that Alberta officials have allowed energy companies to divert too much water for use in oilsands operations, disrupting hunting and trapping and causing economic losses.

By their actions, lawyers working on behalf of government breached the public trust and the Criminal Code, the lawsuit alleges.

Direct Link:

<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/Mikisew+Cree+chief+sues+billion+over+land+claims+settlement/10832878/story.html>

Special Topic: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women

Derek Nepinak: Listen to families of missing and murdered Indigenous women

[Niibin Makwa Derek Nepinak](#)

Published on: February 20, 2015 Last Updated: February 20, 2015 2:19 PM EST



Tina Fontaine, centre, walks during a vigil honouring her daughter, Tina Fontaine, and Faron Hall at the Alexander Docks in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Tuesday, August 19, 2014.

On Feb. 27, provincial and territorial governments and five National Aboriginal Organizations will meet in Ottawa for the National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. A one-day national roundtable is an important first step in a series of steps that must be undertaken to build public awareness and implement action to combat our national tragedy.

There is no degree of separation between our loved ones, disappeared or murdered. We are all one. Over one thousand Manitobans, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, joined the August 2014 march to honour Tina Fontaine, our murdered yet much loved 15-year-old relative. We walked together in the hope that our prayers will lead to action to end this horror.

Many families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls repeatedly say that they are not being heard and their concerns are not being addressed. These concerns range from insufficient resources for families searching for their loved ones, to inadequate funding for existing social agencies working to assist the families.

The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs is listening to families first and laying a path to collaborative action.

Last fall, the assembly led a made-in-Manitoba approach in response to the call for a national inquiry, called “Families First.” Our approach is unique and has been supported by partnerships with the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak and the Southern Chiefs Organization in Manitoba, and by an Assembly of First Nations resolution in December 2014.

Families First informs us all that any process must ensure that: the voices of the families are listened to, heard and understood; families are supported and their loved ones honoured; immediate actions are identified; and the systemic realities of racism, poverty, exclusion, and the willful denial of section 35 rights must be addressed.

Aided by the Public Interest Law Centre and a pro bono legal team, an examination of existing recommendations from inquiries, commissions, roundtables and non-governmental organizations reveals that action can take place immediately.

Families want to share their stories. They want to tackle negative and racist assumptions about their loved ones and to be shown respect. Families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls also require frequent and ongoing coordinated supports to assist in their healing journeys. The inadequacy of supports is particularly apparent for families in Northern and remote First Nations where little or no supports are available. Many families feel a sense of frustration that immediate, concerted actions are not taking place to prevent future harm and support healing.

Families have also said that greater communication with policing agencies and the justice system is crucial. Existing reports emphasize the need for building trust and transparency between authorities and citizens. Support people or advocates must be made available immediately to assist families in navigating policing and justice systems.

Many families are also unaware of community safety plans and protocols. Since 2010, Public Safety Canada has administered a program enabling First Nation communities to develop community safety plans tailored to each community. A closer examination of these programs reveals only one completed plan (with no name) and no information on implementation. The federal government could be addressing family concerns by releasing more information on this existing program and providing continued and sufficient funding for the implementation of community safety plans.

The AMC also heard that families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls want to prevent future crimes by reaching out to and empowering women and youth on the streets. Families believe early education and awareness-building are key. They also identified the need for more 24 hour safe spaces and more supports for individuals and families transitioning from First Nation communities to urban centres. To address some of these concerns, increased financial support for programs offered by urban transition centres is needed.

The critically important first step to enable immediate and on-going actions is to listen and attempt to understand those who are directly affected. We must work together to develop solutions that are community based and lead to real change. February 27 is another step on the road. We have a long way to go, but we must go together.

Nübin Makwa Derek Nepinak, B.A., LL.B. is the Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and is on leave from the Masters in Indigenous Governance program at the University of Winnipeg.

Direct Link: <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/derek-nepinak-listen-to-families-of-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women>

FSIN holds meeting before national round table on violence against Indigenous women

Indigenous Women Roundtable brainstorms solutions ahead of Ottawa roundtable next week

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 19, 2015 6:11 PM CT Last Updated: Feb 19, 2015 6:11 PM CT



Kimberly Jonathan is the interim chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. (Trevor Bothorel/CBC News)

The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations held a meeting Thursday to try to brainstorm solutions for reducing violence against Aboriginal women.

The meeting, held in Saskatoon at the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, comes before an Assembly of First Nations national round table on the same topic taking place in Ottawa at the end of the month.

"We're not undermining the national inquiry," Interim Chief of the FSIN Kimberly Jonathan said "It's our responsibility as individuals and as agencies, organizations, and governments to come together to find these solutions to fix it because it's not okay."

Jonathan said some of the solutions so far include addressing issues of poverty, the lack of access to health care, and education.



Cara Wolfe holds a picture of her daughter, Karina who has been missing for more than four years. (Trevor Bothorel/CBC News)

For women who couldn't attend, there was a survey option where they could submit ideas to the FSIN.

More than just a number

Fighting to find a solution to the ongoing problem of missing and murdered indigenous women is especially important for women like Cara Wolfe.

Wolfe is a member of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation. The deaf woman said through a note that was read at the meeting Thursday that her daughter Karina Wolfe has been missing for more than four years.

"I'll never give up on her, I'll still keep strong and positive," Wolfe wrote in a letter.

According to Jonathan, women like Karina are often just seen as a number.

"To us she's a family member. She's a daughter, she's a niece, and she's one of our women that we need to hold up as our educated, brilliant, beautiful indigenous women and they need to know that, too," Jonathan said.

Moving forward, Jonathan is preparing to represent Saskatchewan First Nations women at the national round table. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development minister Bernard Valcourt as well as Labour and Status of Women minister Kellie Leitch are reportedly planning on attending on February 27.

"There is hope because they are at the table," Jonathan said.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/fsin-holds-meeting-before-national-round-table-on-violence-against-indigenous-women-1.2963903>

Federal gov't must take lead role on missing and murdered aboriginal women, Wyant says

By Jeremy Warren, The Starphoenix February 23, 2015



Justice Minister Gord Wyant will be among the delegates attending a national roundtable on missing and murdered indigenous women in Ottawa on Feb. 27. (Troy Fleece/Leader-Post files)

Saskatchewan's justice minister will add his voice to calls for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women when he attends a national meeting of First Nations and political leaders.

"We really think the federal government needs to take a leadership role when it comes to addressing root causes of why there is so much violence against aboriginal women and girls," said provincial Justice Minister Gord Wyant in a phone interview.

Wyant is heading to Ottawa on Feb. 27 for the roundtable organized by the Assembly of First Nations. Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations interim Chief Kim Jonathan is among the other delegates who will be going.

Premier Brad Wall is not attending.

The one-day meeting is bringing together aboriginal groups and members of federal, provincial and territorial governments to discuss murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. Many hope the event will lead to a national inquiry, something Prime Minister Stephen Harper has rejected.

The Saskatchewan government, Saskatoon city council and the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association have called for the federal government to establish an inquiry.

"We're hoping that this roundtable is a step in that direction, if we can agree on some positive steps to be taken," Wyant said. "This will be a good opportunity to continue the dialogue. Our hope is that from this roundtable we will continue to look at what we can do collectively to advance solutions or protocols around reducing the amount of violence against aboriginal women and girls."

Federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt and Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch are reportedly attending the roundtable, along with provincial and territorial premiers and ministers.

Between 1980 and 2012, 153 aboriginal women were murdered in Saskatchewan, compared to 116 non-aboriginal women, according to RCMP. Yet aboriginal women only represent about 15 per cent of the province's population.

Wyant said he hopes to hear from the families of victims to learn about their experiences in the justice system.

"This is an opportunity to listen to family members. They certainly have a voice and hearing from the families will be important," he said.

The Saskatchewan government could share with the roundtable its experience working with a provincial partnership committee on missing persons and raise issues such as the education funding gap between on-reserve and off-reserve schools, the minister said.

"We need to talk about what programs in what provinces are working and what isn't working," Wyant said.

"We know what the issues are, so to continue the dialogue and work on programming that's going to reduce the risk of violence is important and that's what we really hope we get out of this."

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/Federal+must+take+lead+role+missing+murdered+aboriginal/10835066/story.html>

We must work together to halt violence on aboriginal women and girls

By: Derek Nepinak

Posted: 3:00 AM | [Comments: 17](#) | Last Modified: 7:59 AM | [Updates](#)



Manitobans flocked to a vigil for murdered teen Tina Fontaine in August.

In August last year, more than a thousand Manitobans, indigenous and non-indigenous alike, joined a march to honour Tina Fontaine, our murdered, much-loved 15-year-old.

This, to me, showed there is no degree of separation between our loved ones, disappeared or murdered. We are all one. And we walked together in the hope that our prayers will lead to action to end this horror.

On Friday, provincial and territorial governments and five national aboriginal organizations will meet in Ottawa for the national roundtable on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. This roundtable is an important first step in a series that must be taken to build public awareness and implement action to combat our national tragedy.

Many families of those missing and murdered repeatedly say they are not being heard and their concerns are not being addressed. These concerns range from insufficient resources for families searching for their loved ones, to inadequate funding for existing social agencies working to assist families of victims.

The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs is listening to families first and laying a path to collaborative action.

Last fall, the AMC led a made-in-Manitoba approach in response to the call for a national inquiry into the missing and murdered, called Families First. Our approach is unique and has been supported by partnerships with the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak and the Southern Chiefs Organization in Manitoba, and by an Assembly of First Nations resolution in December.

Families First asserts that any process must ensure that: the voices of the families are listened to, heard and understood; families are supported and their loved ones honoured; immediate actions are identified; and the systemic realities of racism, poverty, exclusion and the wilful denial of rights protected under the Constitution's Sec. 35 must be addressed.

Aided by the Public Interest Law Centre and a pro bono legal team, an examination of existing recommendations from inquiries, commissions, roundtables and non-governmental organizations revealed action can take place immediately.

Families want to share their stories. They want to tackle negative and racist assumptions about their loved ones and to be shown respect. Families of the women and girls who have been murdered or who disappeared also require co-ordinated supports to assist in their healing journeys. The inadequacy of supports is particularly apparent for families of victims in northern and remote First Nations, where little or nothing is available.

Many families feel a sense of frustration that immediate, concerted actions are not taking place to prevent future harm and support healing.

Families have also said greater communication with policing agencies and the justice system is crucial. Existing reports emphasize the need for building trust and transparency between authorities and citizens. Support persons or advocates must be made available immediately to assist families in navigating policing and justice systems.

Many families are also unaware of community safety plans and protocols. Since 2010, Public Safety Canada has administered a program enabling First Nations communities to develop community safety plans that are tailored to each community.

A closer examination of these programs reveals only one completed plan (with no name) and no information on implementation. The federal government could be addressing family concerns by releasing more information on this program and providing continued and sufficient funding for the implementation of community safety plans.

The AMC also heard that families of the missing and murdered women and girls want to prevent future crimes by reaching out to and empowering women and youth on the streets. Early education and awareness-building are key. They also identified the need for more 24-hour safe spaces and supports for people moving from First Nations communities to urban centres. Increased financial support for programs offered by urban transition centres is needed.

The critically important first step to enable immediate and ongoing action is to listen and attempt to understand those who are directly affected.

We all have a role in preventing future crimes and in supporting the families of the victims: governments, civil society, policing agencies, educators, media organizations and corporate Canada. We must work together to develop solutions that are community-based and lead to real change.

Families First will be engaging more and more people to co-operatively move for action to end this tragedy and to respect all indigenous peoples. The one-day roundtable on Friday is another step on the road -- we have a long way to go, but we must go together.

Niibin Makwa Derek Nepinak is the grand chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.

Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/analysis/we-are-one-293596431.html>

Roundtable to tackle aboriginal women's 'crisis'

As calls for a national inquiry go on, native groups hope Friday's roundtable in Ottawa on missing and murdered aboriginal women lead to a plan to solve the issue.



Sue Martin, second from left, takes part in a candlelight vigil on Parliament Hill in October 2009 to honour missing or murdered aboriginal women. Martin's 24-year-old daughter Terrie was murdered in 2002.

By: [Donovan Vincent](#) News reporter, Published on Mon Feb 23 2015

Every year on April 29, Sue Martin marks her daughter Terrie's death by holding a vigil where she cooks and invites family members over to pray and share stories about loved ones.

Terrie was 24 when she was murdered in her Calgary home in 2002 while her children were in their rooms. She had been severely beaten, but to this day no one has been charged for the crime.

Martin believes there needs to be tougher laws and more police resources to deal with killings involving aboriginal women, like her daughter.

“We need more education for our women, and more safe places for our women to go,” Martin said, referring to shelters for aboriginal females.

Those are some of the things Martin wants to see come out of Friday’s roundtable in Ottawa on [missing and murdered aboriginal women](#).

The roundtable will bring together representatives from the provinces and territories, national aboriginal groups, and the federal government — two delegates from each group will be at the table.

The aboriginal groups attending include the Assembly of First Nations, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, and the Native Women’s Association of Canada.

Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt and Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch have also said they’ll be participating, as will Premier Kathleen Wynne, her spokesperson said.

The roundtable is being held amid repeated calls for a broader national inquiry — calls the [federal government has slammed the door](#) on.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s government is instead devoting \$5 million a year for five years toward an “action plan” to end violence against aboriginal women, and says a national missing persons DNA index will also help address the problems.

Despite the federal government’s opposition to holding a larger inquiry, aboriginal groups continue to push for one.

Betty Ann Lavalley, national chief of the Congress for Aboriginal Peoples, who will be at the table Friday, represents one such group.

“Who knows. There’s a federal election coming up. Maybe the next time around there will be a better understanding and sympathy toward what a lot of these (missing and murdered) women when through, and hopefully see the rationale for a national inquiry,” Lavalley said in an interview.

Dawn Harvard, interim president of the Native Women’s Association of Canada, noted that provincial leaders such as Premier Kathleen Wynne understand the missing and murdered aboriginal women’s issue is “a crisis” even though the federal government doesn’t see things that way.

“How do you have these (different) views of reality?” asked Harvard, a member of the Wikwemikong First Nation on Manitoulin Island who will also be at the table Friday.

Last May, the [RCMP released a report](#) that found between 1980 and 2012 there were 1,181 police-recorded incidents involving missing aboriginal females and homicides — 1,017 in all — of aboriginal females.

Most of the homicides were committed by men who knew their victims, the report said. The roundtable will address key themes including, prevention and awareness, police and justice system responses, and “community safety plans and protocols.”

The roundtable grew out of a meeting in August between provincial premiers and national aboriginal groups.

Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde, another roundtable member, said he wants the discussion to lead to “a co-ordinated action plan” aimed at preventing the problem of missing and murdered aboriginal women.

“Where are the daycares needed to help support ending the violence? We need more resources and co-ordination when it comes to investigating when indigenous women and girls go missing.

“Their lives matter,” Bellegarde added.

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/02/23/roundtable-to-tackle-aboriginal-womens-crisis.html>

Wynne says federal funds for violence against aboriginal women a 'drop in the bucket'

[Mark Kennedy, Ottawa Citizen](#) Published on: February 25, 2015 Last Updated: February 25, 2015 8:17 PM EST



Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne is urging the federal government to put more money on the table to combat the problem of missing and murdered aboriginal women, saying the funds set aside so far are just a “drop in the bucket.”

Wynne made the comments in an interview with the Citizen Wednesday, as she prepared for a national roundtable on the issue to be held in Ottawa Friday.

Wynne, who was a former aboriginal affairs minister before becoming premier, spoke passionately about the need for federal and provincial governments to work with First Nation leaders.

Friday’s roundtable will draw representatives from every province and territory (including some premiers), spokespeople from some indigenous groups and two ministers from the federal cabinet — Aboriginal Affairs Minister Valcourt and Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch.

The premiers have seen their calls for a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women repeatedly rejected by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, so the next best thing — for now — is the one-day roundtable.

Wynne said she hopes the meeting produces a “pan-Canadian” education campaign to inform the public about the problem.

She indicated she is not impressed with the federal response to the premiers’ calls for an inquiry.

“I think it’s really disappointing. To me it’s a denial of the facts.

“On the whole relationship between the government and the aboriginal people in this country, I think we have a history of falling way short of acceptable.”

She said the specific problem of missing and murdered women is related to the social conditions that aboriginal people live in.

“It’s housing, it’s water, it’s education.”

Wynne said she’s concerned that the two federal ministers will come to Friday’s meeting merely speaking about how their government has allocated \$25 million over five years to combat violence against aboriginal women and girls.

“Twenty five million dollars in terms of the issues we are confronting in our relationship with First Nations and aboriginal people is a drop in the bucket. We need to understand that we are talking about housing infrastructure on reserves. We’re talking about schools that are falling down and need to be upgraded. We’re talking about water systems that are broken down.”

Wynne said she has told the prime minister that Ontario is willing to increase its own funds in programs for First Nations.

“We can do better if we work together. There is no doubt in my mind.”

Earlier Wednesday, the country’s top First Nations chief said Valcourt was “ill-informed” when he spoke about how indigenous men have a lack of respect for women on reserves.

“You’ve got to be careful about blaming the victims again and blaming the communities,” Assembly of First Nations (AFN) national chief Perry Bellegarde said.

“It’s all about colonization and we’re still reeling from the intergenerational effects of the residential schools.”

Bellegarde was reacting to controversial comments made in December by Valcourt in an interview with the Citizen.

At the time, [Valcourt rejected calls for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women](#) and also said that “part of the problem” was that when “guys grow up believing that women have no rights (on reserves), that’s how they are treated.”

Bellegarde said Valcourt’s comments show that he lacks a proper understanding of what led to the problems in First Nations communities.

“I think they were ill-informed. We’ve got to do a better job of educating not only the ministers in government, but the general public, about the impacts of this situation – about missing and murdered women and girls and the violence in our communities.”

Last year, an RCMP report found 1,181 cases of murdered or missing indigenous women in Canada since 1980.

Direct Link: <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/aboriginal-chief-says-minister-ill-informed-on-violence-against-indigenous-women>

Canada fails to protect indigenous women from violence: Amnesty

Wed Feb 25, 2015 12:53pm EST

TORONTO (Reuters) - Canada must do more to address alarmingly high levels of violence and discrimination against indigenous women and girls, and systemic violations of the rights of its aboriginal people, Amnesty International said on Wednesday.

Noting it has raised concern about disproportionate violence against indigenous women and girls in Canada for 10 years, the rights group said in its annual report that Canada's federal government is not protecting aboriginal women.

"(We have) again drawn attention to the shocking levels of violence against indigenous women and girls in Canada, and the urgent need for a public inquiry and national action plan to address the crisis," said Alex Neve, secretary general of Amnesty International Canada.

Amnesty has long said the government has failed to reduce the marginalization of indigenous women, who are economically and socially disadvantaged.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said last May that 1,017 aboriginal women were murdered between 1980 and 2012. Another 108 are missing under suspicious circumstances, with some cases dating back to 1952.

The Conservative government has said the disproportionate violence against aboriginal women and girls is a criminal, not a sociological, problem that would not be helped by a national inquiry.

The country's 1.4 million aboriginals have higher levels of poverty and a lower life expectancy than other Canadians, and are more often the victims of violent crime.

Less than half of them live on reserves, according to Statistics Canada, and aboriginal children make up nearly half of all Canadian children aged 14 and under living in foster care.

Direct Link: <http://ca.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idCAKBN0LT20V20150225>

Harper's record of refusal: An act of violence against Indigenous women

By
[MUSKRAT Magazine](#)
| February 25, 2015



On November 12, 1971, Helen Betty Osborne was sexually assaulted and brutally murdered in the Pas, Northern Manitoba. On August 2014, we learned about the brutal murder of 15 year old Tina Fontaine in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Within the 43 year time span between the two murders, hundreds of Indigenous women have continued to go missing or have been murdered in every region across Canada.

Since 1996, when the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was released, over 40 reports have been delivered to the federal government calling for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women.

In August 2014, the premiers of Canada also called for an inquiry with the chairman of the group of premiers stating there are two possible routes to getting a national public inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women: Prime Minister Stephen Harper changes his mind and calls one -- or he is defeated in the 2015 federal election.

The Harper government consistently refuses to address the issue saying it is, "Not high on the government's radar."

With no end to the violence in sight, Harper's refusal to act equals an act of violence against Indigenous women because it works to perpetuate the current status quo, which is unacceptable.

Saturday, February 14, 2015 marked the 25th Annual Memorial Walk for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada. Outrage and sadness will continue to spurred across the country as Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and organizations at national, provincial and international levels called once again for a public inquiry that includes meaningful engagement with leadership from the families of the victims as well as Indigenous communities and political organizations.

Last week political leaders from First Nations across Ontario joined together to begin their own inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women at a three-day gathering

in Thunder Bay. "The federal government refuses to acknowledge the need for a national inquiry and we will not sit and wait any more," said Deputy Grand Chief Denise Stonefish of the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians.

However the Canadian public must still engage and contribute solutions to this systemic issue.

Visit the [Native Women's Association of Canada](#) to find out where to join our sisters and show the Harper government that Canadians take this issue seriously and could soon bring his government down over it.

Here's a list of some of the most recent reports calling for the Canadian public to address the issue.

1. [SUMA backs inquiry into MMIW, pushes to keep revenue sharing stable](#), Feb. 3, 2015:

The Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, SUMA joined their voices in support of an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women.

2. [The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights \(IACHR\) Issues Report on missing and murdered women](#), December 21, 2014:

The IACHR report focuses on British Columbia and recommends movement to address violence against women and support for the creation of a national-level action plan or nation-wide inquiry into the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

3. [The Women's Legal Education and Action Fund \(LEAF\) makes new research available](#), December 6, 2014:

Following the murder of Inuit university student Loretta Saunders, LEAF published two documents which list and synthesize 40 reports for MMIW advocates.

4. [The Special Committee on Violence Against Indigenous Women issue report](#), March 2014:

The Special Committee on Violence Against Indigenous Women issues a report called 'Invisible women: A Call to Action -- ACAT Canada', concludes by saying "the families

will have to wait until the government changes to get the National Public Enquiry and National Action Plan"

5. [UN Special Rapporteur James Anaya visits Canada and issues report on situation of Indigenous in Canada](#), July 2014:

United Nations Report -- Crisis in Canada following a visit to Canada from October 7-11, 2013 by James Anaya, Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada. The document highlights least 29 official inquiries with 500 recommendations for action have been put forward since 1996.

6. [Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres respond to Royal Canadian Mounted Police](#), May 2014:

Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) response to Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Operations Report slams the November 2013 document. The OFIFC outlines inconsistencies and calls on the RCMP to provide concrete actions to address the high rates of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada.

7. [RCMP issue report Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview](#), November 2013:

Over ten years after Stolen sisters was issued, the RCMP responds to missing and murdered Indigenous women. Brought us to a shocking total of 1100+ cases. Presently, the document is the most cited report used by media.

8. [Coordinating Committee of Senior Officials \(Criminal\): Missing Women Working Group issues report and recommendations](#), January 2012:

Coordinating Committee of Senior Officials (Criminal): Missing Women Working Group established in February 2006. Focuses between 2006 and 2010 confirming factors under which Aboriginal women became victims of violence and issues recommendations to reduce these factors.

9. [Missing Women Commission of Inquiry issues a report in response to Robert Pickton case](#), November 2012:

The Missing Women Commission of Inquiry issues a report entitled 'Forsaken: The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry Executive Summary' a four volume response to British Columbia's Missing and Murdered women in the wake of the Robert Pickton case.

10. [Amnesty International report documents stories of missing and murdered Indigenous Women](#), October 2004:

Amnesty International Report entitled 'Stolen sisters -- A human rights response to Discrimination and Violence against Aboriginal women in Canada' documents the stories of missing and murdered women over 30 years. The culmination of many inquiries (starting as far back as 1971), the report called for "Canadian officials to ensure the rights and safety of Aboriginal people are respected and upheld by police and courts."

This piece originally appeared on [MUSKRAT Magazine](#) and is reprinted with permission.

Direct Link: <http://rabble.ca/news/2015/02/harpers-record-refusal-act-violence-against-indigenous-women>

Officials set to discuss missing, murdered aboriginal women at Ottawa summit



Assembly of First Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde is shown in Ottawa after an interview on Feb. 9, 2015. (Justin Tang / The Canadian Press)

The Canadian Press
Published Wednesday, February 25, 2015 4:33PM EST

OTTAWA -- Getting Canada's Aboriginal Peoples, the provinces and territories and the federal government to gather together in the same room is no small feat.

But familiar sticking points are sure to return during this week's roundtable meeting on the issue of murdered and missing aboriginal women -- particularly when it comes to deciding who will pay for and administer the parts of a plan to end the violence.

That could result in some "challenging discussions" among the groups when they gather Friday in the ballroom of a downtown Ottawa hotel, Assembly of First Nations national chief Perry Bellegarde said Wednesday.

"It'll be the jurisdictional piece -- who's paying from the feds and the provinces, who's responsible, you know, in terms of financial investments, that's going to be an issue and ongoing, where the resources are coming from," Bellegarde said in an interview.

"The who, what, when and why, when it comes to the administration of it."

Both Bellegarde and Northwest Territories Premier Bob McLeod, who is chairing the meeting, say most of the details of the plan have already been worked out and Friday's meeting will mostly be about putting on the finishing touches.

But there are still big question marks -- including who pays for what.

"We haven't gotten to that detail," McLeod said.

The roundtable will bring together families of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls, groups representing First Nations, Inuit and Metis, and representatives of the provinces, territories and the federal government.

Four premiers -- McLeod, Ontario's Kathleen Wynne, Greg Selinger of Manitoba and Yukon's Darrell Pasloski -- are scheduled to attend. The Conservative government, meanwhile, has tapped Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt and Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch to take part.

The agenda has been whittled down to three key themes: prevention and awareness; community safety; and policing measures and justice responses.

That's still a lot to pack into a seven-hour meeting -- especially considering that each person is only allowed four minutes to speak on each topic.

Talk will inevitably turn to a full-blown national inquiry on murdered and missing aboriginal women and girls -- something that most people in the room agree is needed but which remains a no-go for the Conservative government.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper and some of his cabinet ministers have insisted that enough people have studied the problem and that the time has come to take action.

Still, calls for a national inquiry have been growing since RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson revealed last year that nearly 1,200 aboriginal women have been murdered or gone missing in Canada in the last 30 years -- hundreds more than previously thought.

One of the challenges for McLeod and moderator Marie Delorme is to keep people from straying off the agenda and into what would probably end up being a fruitless discussion about a national inquiry.

"In my view, we have to guard against that," McLeod said.

"I don't see any reason why we can't have a number of different activities going on. One doesn't preclude the other. I don't see why we should preclude having a national roundtable or national roundtables at the expense of a national inquiry. I think we can have both a national roundtable and also continue to call for a national inquiry."

There's already talk of the groups meeting again in a year's time to take stock of their progress.

"It's not just a roundtable to dialogue and talk," Bellegarde said. "It's all about getting something done."

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/officials-set-to-discuss-missing-murdered-aboriginal-women-at-ottawa-summit-1.2253445>

Aboriginal chief: Minister's comments 'ill-informed'

By Mark Kennedy, Ottawa Citizen February 26, 2015



Assembly of First Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde: 'You've got to be careful about blaming the victims again and blaming the communities.'

The country's top First Nations chief says federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt was "ill-informed" when he spoke about how indigenous men have a lack of respect for women on reserves.

"You've got to be careful about blaming the victims again and blaming the communities," Perry Bellegarde of the Assembly of First Nations said Wednesday. "It's all about colonization and we're still reeling from the intergenerational effects of the residential schools."

Bellegarde was reacting to controversial comments Valcourt made in December.

At the time, Valcourt rejected calls for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and also said "part of the problem" was that when "guys grow up believing that women have no rights (on reserves), that's how they are treated."

Valcourt urged First Nations chiefs to "take ownership of this issue" and address it themselves, with federal help, in their own communities.

Bellegarde, who was elected AFN chief in December, says he intends to raise Valcourt's comments when they meet.

That might occur as early as this Friday, when a national roundtable is held in Ottawa to examine the politically hot issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Among those attending are representatives from every province and territory (including some premiers), spokespeople from some indigenous groups (including Bellegarde), and two ministers from the federal cabinet (Valcourt and Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch.)

Bellegarde said Valcourt's comments show that he lacks a proper understanding of what led to the problems in First Nations communities.

"I think they were illinformed. We've got to do a better job of educating not only the ministers in government, but the general public, about the impacts of this situation - about missing and murdered women and girls and the violence in our communities."

Bellegarde stressed that it's important to understand how the residential school system left First Nations scarred.

Over many decades, 150,000 aboriginal children were sent by the federal government to church-run schools, where many faced physical and sexual abuse.

"When you come out of that residential school system, you've lost your identity of self. You've lost your pride in who you are, you've lost your identity and your role - both as male and females."

"You don't know how to love or care for a family when you come out of that system."

Bellegarde said the country has to come to grips with how the residential schools created a "cultural genocide."

"We have, because of that imposed system, lost our way. And even (regarding) the roles of our men. We want them to be warriors. We want them to be productive family members.

"We want them to make sure that they know their role. And the expectation is that they will be good fathers and good uncles. That's what we want to see. But there is that whole training and wellness that has to happen in the communities."

At this Friday's roundtable, participants will discuss issues such as violence prevention, community safety, policing measures and the judicial system.

In the House of Commons Wednesday, Leitch said the government will not appoint an inquiry. Rather, she said the government has already pressed forward with initiatives such as a victim's bill of rights and enacting matrimonial rights on reserves. Last year, an RCMP report found 1,181 cases of murdered or missing indigenous women in Canada since 1980.

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/Aboriginal+chief+Minister+comments+informed/10844096/story.html>

Missing and murdered indigenous women roundtable to include families

Two days of meetings kick off in Ottawa

By Martha Troian, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 26, 2015 12:29 PM ET Last Updated: Feb 26, 2015 4:17 PM ET



Lorelei Williams is in Ottawa to attend the first national roundtable on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Her aunt has been missing since 1977 and her cousin's DNA was found on Robert Pickton's farm. (Facebook)

Lorelei Williams is in Ottawa to attend the first national roundtable on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, a two-day event that kicked off today.

The event was organized by several indigenous groups, including the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations.

Today there is a closed meeting for families of the missing and murdered. They are there by invitation and will help guide the content of a presentation that will be made to a meeting of government officials and representatives from indigenous organizations that takes place on Friday.

Williams, from the St'at'imc and Sts'ailes Nations, said she welcomes the opportunity to participate, but she isn't sure what will be achieved.

"I feel at least there's something happening," said Williams. "I think any approach is good right now considering we have nothing right now."



In 1977, Lorelei Williams's aunt, Belinda Williams, disappeared in British Columbia without a trace. (Supplied by Lorelei Williams)

In 1977, her aunt Belinda Williams disappeared without a trace. Two decades later, her cousin Tanya Holyk also went missing. In 2002, investigators in British Columbia found Holyk's DNA on convicted killer Robert Pickton's farm.

Pickton was charged with murdering 26 women. In 2007, he was sentenced for the second-degree murders of six women. Most of his victims were from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

At today's closed meeting, it will be up to the families to decide which four delegates among them will participate at Friday's roundtable.

Friday's roundtable

The roundtable is a closed meeting of families of the missing and murdered, indigenous organizations, premiers from 13 provinces and territories and federal ministers.



AFN Chief Perry Bellegarde says he remains optimistic that the roundtable in Ottawa is an 'interim step' towards a national public inquiry. (Justin Tang/The Canadian Press)

The Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde said the roundtable is meant to develop a co-ordinated action plan to combat violence against indigenous women and girls. Prevention and awareness, community safety, policing and justice will be on the agenda.

Last week, Bellegarde said he remains optimistic that the roundtable in Ottawa on Feb. 27 is an "interim step" towards a much-needed national, public inquiry examining what he sees as the root causes of violence against indigenous women.

Each invited organization, province and territory was allowed to bring 10 participants and were encouraged to make family members part of their delegation.

Of those 10 delegates, only two are allowed to participate in the roundtable meeting at any time (delegates can rotate). The other eight are there strictly as observers and cannot take part in discussions or ask questions. The federal delegates are Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt and Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch.

After the meeting concludes, a short document will be produced that will outline the outcomes and next steps to be taken.

Williams hopes for action

"I'm hoping there will be more support for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls," says Williams.

"I am definitely going to voice that if I can."

She said she was discouraged after sitting through the B.C. missing women's inquiry last year.

'When the women have support, they will use it.' - *Lorelei Williams, First Nations participant*

Williams would also like to see more action and commitment from both levels of governments.

She works as an outreach co-ordinator at the Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre where many of her clients are related to missing and murdered women. She said funding cutbacks are proof that the issue isn't being taken seriously.

"When the women have support, they will use it," she said.



Tanya Holyk went missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside in 1996. Her cousin, Lorelei Williams, wants more government action on missing indigenous women. (Missingpeople.net)

As she pushes for action, Williams hangs on to the memories she has of her cousin Tanya.

"We used to always go the park, the baseball field. My aunts and uncles would play baseball and we would always get together."

Growing up, she was often told she looked like her aunt Belinda. Family members struggled over the loss of their loved one, she said.

"Every time I talked about my auntie their voices would shake," Williams said.

"Whatever I can do to help. I don't want this to happen to any other family, seeing how it affected my family."

There will also be a public event on Friday called The Peoples' Gathering. Participants will discuss solutions and make recommendations to end violence against women and

girls. Speakers will include elders, leaders, health support workers, and families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Video of the event will be streamed on the web.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-roundtable-to-include-families-1.2972445>

Violence against indigenous women: What's expected at Friday's meeting

[Mark Kennedy, Ottawa Citizen](#)

Published on: February 26, 2015 Last Updated: February 26, 2015 4:41 PM EST



Rinelle Harper, who was attacked in Manitoba, will be at the roundtable in Ottawa Friday.

Federal and provincial politicians are gathering Friday with aboriginal leaders to look for solutions to the problem of missing and murdered aboriginal women. Here are some of the issues.

Q. Why is this meeting being held?

A. It's being called a "national roundtable" and it grew out of a [meeting last summer](#) between provincial premiers and national aboriginal groups. Their repeated calls on the federal government to appoint a national inquiry into the issue had been rebuffed, so they decided to hold a one-day meeting to see what can be done.

Q. Who is attending?

A. Every province and territory is sending a delegation led either by their premier or someone else. Premiers who will attend include Ontario's Kathleen Wynne and Manitoba's Greg Selinger. The three western provinces – British Columbia, Alberta and

Saskatchewan – with large aboriginal populations are opting instead to send cabinet ministers, or in the case of Alberta, an MLA who is a legislative secretary.

Several aboriginal groups will attend, including: the Assembly of First Nations, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the Native Women’s Association of Canada, the Inuit Women of Canada, and the Metis National Council. Spokesman for aboriginal families affected by violence will be there, as will Winnipeg teenager [Rinelle Harper](#), who nearly died in an assault last November.

Two federal cabinet ministers, [Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt](#) and Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch, will attend.

Q. What’s the issue?

A. Provinces and aboriginal groups agree that indigenous women and girls face a higher risk of violence than non-indigenous women. But there’s no clear plan on how to change that.

Q. What are the facts?

A. In May, the [RCMP issued a detailed statistical breakdown](#) of 1,181 cases since 1980. It said aboriginal women make up 4.3 per cent of the Canadian population, but account for 16 per cent of female homicides and 11.3 per cent of missing women.

Q. What does Prime Minister Stephen Harper say?

A. Last summer, [he came under criticism](#) when, reacting to the death of aboriginal teenager Tina Fontaine in Winnipeg, he described the incident as a crime and not part of a “sociological phenomenon.” In December, he said an inquiry is not high on his government’s “radar,” adding that inquiries are expensive and that there have already been enough studies on the issue.

Pressed on the issue in the House of Commons Thursday by the NDP, Harper praised his government’s actions, such as: funds for shelters for women and children; new “investigative tools” for police; and new matrimonial property rights for women on reserves. “Now is the time for action, not for more NDP studies,” he said.

Q. Has that silenced his critics?

A. No. On Thursday, researchers advocating an inquiry released their own review of previous reports stretching back two decades. They say just a few of the more than 700 recommendations have been fully implemented.

Q. What is the federal government doing?

A. Last year, it unveiled a \$25-million “[Action Plan](#),” with the money to be spent over five years to combat violence against aboriginal women and girls. It includes money for community safety, public awareness and victims’ assistance.

Q. Is that enough?

A. Federal ministers such as Leitch say the Action Plan is a solid way to address the problem, but provinces aren’t convinced and Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne says the federal money is just a “drop in the bucket.”

Q. So what’s on the agenda for the roundtable?

A. Participants will focus on four areas: violence prevention and public awareness; making aboriginal communities safe; policing measures and the role of the justice system; and “measuring success” if changes are made.

Q. Will the roundtable produce any concrete improvements?

A. That’s hard to predict. There will likely be promises from governments to work together better in areas such as policing. But after just a few hours of discussion, major reforms appear unlikely. As well, in a potential sign of discord, Valcourt and Leitch are not joining other participants at the roundtable at a closing news conference. Instead, they are holding their own closing news conference at a nearby hotel.

Q. Are the chances of a national inquiry dead?

A. This will be an issue in the federal election. Both the NDP and Liberals say that if they form a government, they will appoint an inquiry.

Direct Link: <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/violence-against-indigenous-women-whats-expected-at-fridays-meeting>

Two decades of studies undercut Ottawa’s plan to combat violence against Indigenous women: report

[National News](#) | 7 hours ago by [APTN National News](#) | [1 Comment](#)

APTN National News

OTTAWA – The federal government’s strategy to deal with the high number of murdered and missing Indigenous women is not supported by nearly 60 studies that have examined the issue, according to a new report.

The Harper government has rejected calls for a national inquiry into the causes behind the nearly 1,200 Indigenous women who have been murdered or gone missing since 1980, arguing the issue has been studied enough and now is the time for “action.” Justice Canada has even released a list of 40 reports to support that position.

A report released Thursday shows that those 40 studies do not “support the government’s stance.” The report, by the Legal Strategy Coalition on Violence Against Indigenous Women (LSC), reviewed a total of 58 studies dating back to 1994.

The LSC report said the federal government wrongly believes that violence against Indigenous women is not a sociological problem, but rather one as a “series of crimes.” Prime Minister Stephen Harper has said he personally doesn’t believe the issue to be a sociological one.

“Despite diverse authors, the reports reviewed show strong consensus about the root causes of this violence; it is a sociological issue,” said the report. “The recommendations that are repeated time and again in so many of the reports highlight exactly why and inquiry is needed: to ascertain the extent to which these recommendations have been implemented and to identify and address obstacles to implementation.”

The report said that many of the studies “stress that the economic and social marginalization of Indigenous women makes them more susceptible to violence and less able to escape violent circumstances.”

The LSC report found that many of the studies found that a toxic mix of family breakdowns, overcrowded housing, food insecurity, lack of access to education and chronic underfunding for services targeting Indigenous women increased their exposure and vulnerability to violence.

Added to this is the continuing racism and sexism in Canada, the legacies of colonialism, the shadow of residential schools and discriminatory legislation like the Indian Act.

“And yet, police and health care professionals fail to adequately prioritize the health and safety of Indigenous women and a lack of culturally sensitive programs prevent the services that already exist from addressing challenges specific to Indigenous women’s experiences,” said the report.

The report was released a day before a planned roundtable on murdered and missing Indigenous women that will include federal and provincial premiers and cabinet ministers along with Indigenous leaders and the families of victims.

The roundtable aims to hammer out a strategy to stem the disproportionate level of violence faced by Indigenous women.

LSC includes a number of First Nation, universities and human rights organizations including Amnesty International, the Nova Scotia Native Women’s Association,

Dalhousie University, University of Saskatchewan, Aboriginal Legal Services Toronto and the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, among others.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/02/26/two-decades-studies-undercut-ottawas-plan-combat-violence-indigenous-women-report/>

Hundreds of expert recommendations on violence against Indigenous women and girls go unimplemented

By

[Legal Strategy Coalition on Violence Against Indigenous Women](#)

| February 26, 2015



An alarming study released today shows that governments in Canada have repeatedly ignored expert recommendations to stop violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Researchers with the Legal Strategy Coalition on Violence Against Indigenous Women reviewed 58 reports dealing with aspects of violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls, including government studies, reports by international human rights bodies, and published research of Indigenous women's organizations. The reports cover a period of two decades. Shockingly, researchers found that only a few of more than 700 recommendations in these reports have ever been fully implemented.

"How many Indigenous women and girls would have been found or would still be alive if governments had acted on more of these recommendations?" asked Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. "This is yet another piece of irrefutable evidence that governments in Canada have breached their fundamental moral and legal responsibility to ensure the safety of all women, without discrimination."

The reports examined in this study include 40 listed by Federal Justice Minister Peter MacKay as evidence of why a national public inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women is not needed.

"The federal government has gotten it all wrong," said Cheryl Maloney, President of the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association. "The fact that governments have been sitting on these reports, leaving important, life-saving recommendations unimplemented, is exactly why we need the intervention of an independent commission of inquiry."

"A national inquiry is needed to examine why there has been so much resistance by successive governments to implementation of known and recommended measures to address the issue," noted LEAF Legal Director Kim Stanton.

Christa Big Canoe, the Legal Director of Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto said, "A properly established inquiry, backed by a clear commitment by government to act on its findings, would provide the kind of accountability to the public that we so sorely lack." She also stated, "Families of missing and murdered women need to have a hand in the creation of an inquiry process and most importantly in establishing the mandate of an inquiry to ensure that the voices of the survivors is heard throughout the whole process, from the beginning to the implementation of recommendations or findings."

The coalition study found broad consensus among the reports that the root causes of the high levels of violence against Indigenous women and girls lie in a history of discrimination beginning with colonization and continuing through laws and policies such as the Indian Act and residential schools.

"This history laid the foundations for pervasive violence and created the risks Indigenous women face today," says Sharon McIvor of the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action. "In this way, the reports directly refute the claim made by the federal government that this is a matter of individual crimes, not a 'social phenomenon'."

"Better policing and community safety measures are important, but they're not the whole picture," said Alex Neve, Amnesty International Canada. "We need to address the root causes that put Indigenous women and girls in harm's way. Unfortunately, despite the analysis set out in all these reports, the federal government still maintains that historical facts and broad sociological patterns can be dismissed and ignored."

Aimée Craft (Mikinaak Ikwe), Indigenous law professor and lawyer, Treaty One, said, "In Winnipeg, our young indigenous women and girls are still disappearing and being victimized. The information and recommendations that have been gathered to date have not prevented further harm against us. We need a commitment to act and an Inquiry process that will give voice to our social circumstances and the hope that we can live good and safe lives."

Mary Teegee, Executive Director, Child and Family Services, Carrier Sekani Family Services said, "Our ultimate goal is to have in place the kind of comprehensive, well-

informed and well-resourced national action plan that's needed to stop the violence. But as this study makes clear, we're not going to get there unless there's some way to hold governments more accountable."

The study was endorsed by the following individuals and organizations which are members of the Legal Strategy Coalition:

Aboriginal Legal Services Toronto

Amnesty International Canada

Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS)

Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA)

Carrier Sekani Family Services

Law Office of Mary Eberts

Constance MacIntosh, Director, Dalhousie Health Law Institute, Associate Professor, Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University

Nova Scotia Native Women's Association

Kim Pate, Sallows Chair in Human Rights – Faculty of Law, University of Saskatchewan

Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs

Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF)

West Coast LEAF

An executive summary of the report is [here](#).

The full report analysing the implementation of past recommendations is [here](#).

A spreadsheet summarizing the previous reports is [here](#).

A list of the recommendations contained in the previous reports is [here](#).

Direct Link: <http://rabble.ca/news/2015/02/hundreds-expert-recommendations-on-violence-against-indigenous-women-and-girls-go-unimp>

Murdered, Missing Aboriginal Women Roundtable To Discuss Who Pays For What

CP | By Steve Rennie, The Canadian Press

Posted: 02/25/2015 4:11 pm EST Updated: 02/25/2015 6:59 pm EST



THE CANADIAN PRESS 

OTTAWA - Getting Canada's Aboriginal Peoples, the provinces and territories and the federal government to gather together in the same room is no small feat.

But familiar sticking points are sure to return during this week's roundtable meeting on the issue of murdered and missing aboriginal women — particularly when it comes to deciding who will pay for and administer the parts of a plan to end the violence.

That could result in some "challenging discussions" among the groups when they gather Friday in the ballroom of a downtown Ottawa hotel, Assembly of First Nations national chief Perry Bellegarde said Wednesday.

"It'll be the jurisdictional piece — who's paying from the feds and the provinces, who's responsible, you know, in terms of financial investments, that's going to be an issue and ongoing, where the resources are coming from," Bellegarde said in an interview.

"The who, what, when and why, when it comes to the administration of it."

Both Bellegarde and Northwest Territories Premier Bob McLeod, who is chairing the meeting, say most of the details of the plan have already been worked out and Friday's meeting will mostly be about putting on the finishing touches.

But there are still big question marks — including who pays for what.

"We haven't gotten to that detail," McLeod said.

The roundtable will bring together families of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls, groups representing First Nations, Inuit and Metis, and representatives of the provinces, territories and the federal government.

Four premiers — McLeod, Ontario's Kathleen Wynne, Greg Selinger of Manitoba and Yukon's Darrell Pasloski — are scheduled to attend. The Conservative government, meanwhile, has tapped Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt and Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch to take part.

The agenda has been whittled down to three key themes: prevention and awareness; community safety; and policing measures and justice responses.

That's still a lot to pack into a seven-hour meeting — especially considering that each person is only allowed four minutes to speak on each topic.

Talk will inevitably turn to a full-blown national inquiry on murdered and missing aboriginal women and girls — something that most people in the room agree is needed but which remains a no-go for the Conservative government.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper and some of his cabinet ministers have insisted that enough people have studied the problem and that the time has come to take action.

Still, calls for a national inquiry have been growing since RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson revealed last year that nearly 1,200 aboriginal women have been murdered or gone missing in Canada in the last 30 years — hundreds more than previously thought.

One of the challenges for McLeod and moderator Marie Delorme is to keep people from straying off the agenda and into what would probably end up being a fruitless discussion about a national inquiry.

"In my view, we have to guard against that," McLeod said.

"I don't see any reason why we can't have a number of different activities going on. One doesn't preclude the other. I don't see why we should preclude having a national roundtable or national roundtables at the expense of a national inquiry. I think we can have both a national roundtable and also continue to call for a national inquiry."

There's already talk of the groups meeting again in a year's time to take stock of their progress.

"It's not just a roundtable to dialogue and talk," Bellegarde said. "It's all about getting something done."

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/02/25/devil-in-the-details-at-r_n_6754616.html

Special Topic: International Indigenous Populations

Native American Tribes and the Future of Marijuana

Forget the handful of states that have legalized the drug. There are 566 tribes currently mulling whether to sell pot.

[Debra Bruno](#)

Feb 19, 2015



Thanks to a clarifying [memo from the Justice Department](#) last October, Native American tribes can now decide for themselves whether to legalize, grow, process, or sell marijuana on their lands. Which means tribes are going to be in the “same situation” as states, says Salvador Mungia, a Tacoma-based lawyer who has represented the ACLU in recent Washington state marijuana cases. Just like a state can decide whether to allow medical marijuana, recreational marijuana, or both, Indian reservations can also choose to open a pot dispensary or grow fields of legalized weed on their lands.

Even though marijuana is still illegal on the federal level, “enforcing marijuana laws [on tribal land] is not a high priority,” says Seattle lawyer Robert McVay, “as long as tribes are regulating their business.”

But what all this actually means for the nation's 566 tribes and 310 reservations is still very much an open question. McVay's firm, Seattle-based HarrisMoure, together with attorney Robert Odawi Porter, is hosting a conference later this month to look at the issues. It's the first large-scale meeting, the sponsors say, to take a look at what Native Americans might do with marijuana.

Already, at least 30 tribes from 13 states have registered, says McVay.

One of the thorniest issues is what legalization would mean for a tribe located in or adjacent to a state where marijuana is illegal in every circumstance.

"Everyone—everyone—is talking about medical marijuana."

The Justice Department memos on the subject "do not constitute a get-out-of-jail-free card," says Porter. "It's an evolution, and you can't do this on the fly." To add to the complications, some states—[Alaska, California, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oregon, and Wisconsin](#)—have criminal jurisdiction over Indian lands.

A few members of tribes in Florida and North Dakota, states that have not approved medical nor recreational marijuana, have signed up for the conference. But, says McVay, "it's not clear that they are attending just to see what's going on, or because they are interested in moving forward with an operation."

Interest is even higher among tribes in states that already have some form of legalization.

"Everyone—everyone—is talking about medical marijuana," says Stacey Montooth, a spokeswoman for the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, a 20-acre preserve set inside the city boundaries of Reno, Nevada, a state that allows medical marijuana.

"As far as the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony is concerned, we are always looking for economic development opportunities," she adds. Her tribal leaders are looking into what their options might be but haven't made any decisions yet, she says. But there's a sense that this is an opportunity that could rival the money-making abilities of casinos.

"If every state and every tribe participated in medical marijuana, it could be a multi-billion dollar industry," Montooth says.

Next week, a breakout session of the National Congress of American Indians' winter executive meeting will focus on tribal marijuana policy. The session, closed to press, will include Justice Department law enforcement officials and representatives from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.



Meanwhile, one tribe in Northern California has already jumped into the growing game. The Pinoleville Pomo Nation announced plans in January to [build a \\$10 million indoor marijuana cultivation facility](#) in Mendocino County, with an eye on California's eventual legalization of recreational pot (the state has allowed medical marijuana since 1996).

Growing hemp is another potential moneymaker for American Indians, says Amanda Reiman, a manager of marijuana policy and law at the Berkeley-based Drug Policy Alliance. Hemp, which can be grown to make fiber, paper, and oil, doesn't have the psychoactive elements found in other forms of cannabis. "So you don't have concerns about driving under the influence" with hemp cultivation, Reiman notes.

"I think it's a real opportunity for tribes to get involved. Security is low and it could be a financial boom for communities."

"That was a big selling point—you've gotta tax the hell out of it."

Still, there are plenty of complications that could arise. For instance, there's the question of how marijuana coming from Indian lands might be taxed. "Reservations have a history of attracting business by not charging taxes" for items like cigarettes, says Jacob Sullum, an editor at *Reason* magazine who writes frequently about marijuana policy. "That could be an advantage for them."

This dynamic could especially create headaches in states that have made a case to voters that revenue from taxes on marijuana could pay for various social programs, says Sullum. In both Washington and Colorado, voters were enticed by the tax revenue from legalization. "That was a big selling point—you've gotta tax the hell out of it," he says. If Indian tribes are offering a cheaper alternative, "that would make it difficult for newly legal businesses to compete."

And then there's the elephant in the room: for some tribes, a long history of substance abuse among members might make them think twice about embracing marijuana. Porter, who is the former president of the Seneca Nation of Indians, says that some tribal governments "are worried about its impact on the citizens and its children."

Montooth, who is a member of the Walker River Paiute Tribe in Nevada, agrees that the high rate of alcohol abuse among Native Americans, coupled with high unemployment numbers, must be taken into consideration. "It's a very complicated matter," she says.

One possible hint of marijuana's future on Indian land might come from the location of the attorney-sponsored conference this month. It's being held at the Tulalip Resort Casino in Ceda Village, Washington, a resort offering slots, game tables, eight restaurants, and shows.

Direct Link: <http://www.citylab.com/crime/2015/02/native-american-tribes-and-the-future-of-marijuana/385675/>

Watch Trans Actress Audition in *Drunktown's Finest* to Become a 'Women of the Navajo'



Trans director Sydney Freeland's debut film is set near the Navajo reservation where she was raised.

By [Jerry Portwood](#)

February 20 2015 1:30 PM EST
12315

With very few films about the Native American experience, it might seem easy to turn in something that plunders the "exotic" reservation landscape just to titillate us outsiders. But Sydney Freeland's debut feature, [*Drunktown's Finest*](#), which was a hit at last year's Sundance Film Festival, offers a refreshing narrative and unusual characters — even for

an independent film. The film, by a trans director, follows three young American Indians: Sick Boy (Jeremiah Bitsui), who is a soon-to-be father days away from the start of basic training, Nizhoni (Morningstar Angeline Wilson), a college-bound adopted daughter of Christian missionaries, and a trans woman, Felixia (Carmen Moore), who is forced to sell her body to survive.

For those who might think that the trans element is just to "cash in" on the trans wave, put your worries aside. Freeland, a trans woman herself, is extremely conscious of why and how she makes movies. And as [she explained in an interview](#) before the film's premiere:

"For the role of Felixia, it was very important that we cast someone who was transgender. I'm very grateful to have met Carmen Moore, who is both trans and Navajo. When I was writing the script (around 2009), I saw a video of her on YouTube and was like, "That's Felixia!" Fortunately, she read the script and liked it, and was even able to come up to the Sundance Directors Lab in 2010. I was really impressed with her because she brought a depth and authenticity to the character that very few people would have been able to. I'm really happy with her performance in the film."

In this exclusive clip from the film *Felixia* (Moore) auditions to be a beauty pageant contestant who is competing to become one of the "Women of the Navajo."

***Drunktown's Finest* opens in New York Feb. 20, and In L.A. Feb. 27.**

Direct Link: <http://www.out.com/movies/2015/2/20/drunktowns-finest-trans-navaho-sydney-freeland>

Native American yearns for old views of gays, lesbians



Brandon Stabler, of the U-M'n-Ho'n (Omaha) tribe, poses Saturday at his Lincoln home in traditional regalia, which he made. Stabler hopes to be the first Native American man in Nebraska to enter into a same-sex marriage.

February 21, 2015 10:30 pm

This report is made possible by the Heartland Project, an initiative to broaden news coverage of Nebraska's communities of color, as well as gay, lesbian and transgender issues.

The project is funded by the Ford Foundation and is a collaboration among the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Journalism and Mass Communications, the Asian American Journalists Association and the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association.

Reach the Heartland Project's lead reporter, Bobby Caina Calvin, at bobbyc@heartlandproj.org.

It was a moment to savor when Massachusetts began issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples. But Abbi Swatsworth and her partner of 18 yea... [Read more](#)

Brandon Stabler remembers the taunts he heard as a boy growing up in Walthill, a village of about 200 homes in the middle of Indian Country on the Nebraska side of the Missouri River.

All those names he was called. All those slurs are now a blur of hateful and hurtful words. Stabler, a member of the Omaha tribe, recalls feeling unwelcomed by a culture that never returned his embrace.

When he was 21, he packed what clothes he could in a green duffle bag and hitched a ride with a friend to Florida. He found himself sleeping on the sand, he said, on South Beach, with just \$20 in his pockets and a resolve to leave Nebraska behind.

"All my life, I was told that being gay was wrong, especially at the reservation," said Stabler, now 32. It wasn't always that direct, but "I felt like nobody liked gay people."

But there was a different time, when gays and lesbians were not only accepted in Native communities but, in some cases, revered because they embodied the "two spirits:" male and female.

The Omaha called two-spirited tribal members "mexoga." The Lakota called them "winkte." And the Navajo used the word "nadleehe."

Myron Long Soldier, an Omaha elder who lives in Lincoln, harkened back to a time when Native Americans treated two-spirited people with sacredness and reverence.

That began changing with forced assimilation, he said, as Catholic friars and other evangelists swept into Native America along with the U.S. Cavalry to impose their will and culture on the people of the frontier.

And the white man's religion introduced the concept of sin in describing two-spirited people, Long Soldier said.

Long Soldier hopes young Native Americans will be empowered to step out into the open "as the people they are" as LGBT communities struggle for greater awareness and acceptance in mainstream society and Native cultures.

The influences of Western culture, as well as social and religious indoctrination, have generated conflicted thinking about sexuality in Native cultures, said Nettie Grant Sikyta, the director of youth programs and suicide prevention at the Indian Center in Lincoln.

As a result, she said, gay youth, Native or otherwise, "have sometimes been ostracized and identified as different. They're unique, and that doesn't make it a bad thing."

Traditional tribal culture, she said, espouses acceptance. "We try to view other people as the people they are, not what they are. I think our culture is one that is more accepting."

Clyde Tyndall, the Indian Center's executive director, said a creed of acceptance is indeed the way of his people and that more must be done to help gay and Lesbian youth.

"Younger generations need to be taught the respect that older generations had" for two-spirited people, said Tindall, who straddles both his native culture and his Christianity.

"Back then, things were different," Tindall said. "Elders thought there was certain wisdom (two-spirited people) possessed because they might see things differently than everybody else."

Stabler, who is now openly gay and is in a committed relationship with a non-Native man, concedes he does not know a lot about the old concept of "two spirits." But he yearns for the old ways of thinking about gays and lesbians.

"I wish I had learned about 'two spirits,'" Stabler said. "Maybe I wouldn't have felt left out and lost. I'm very happy and proud for those tribes who still believe in it."

He says tribes need to be stronger allies, particularly in marriage equality. "There is nothing stopping them from allowing gays and lesbians to marry," he said, asserting that tribes have their own authority to grant same-sex marriage licenses.

Stabler wants to be remembered as the first Native American man to marry another man in Nebraska -- when it becomes legal. He hopes that day will soon come.

"I love who I am," Stabler said. "I am gay, and I am a Native American man. I am both, and I am very proud of that."

Direct Link: http://journalstar.com/news/local/native-american-yearns-for-old-views-of-gays-lesbians/article_7c70f55e-ca26-5c28-be12-1ae334bd2c8a.html

Inyo County man accused of removing Native American relics from public land



Norman Starks of Lone Pine faces 10 years in prison and a \$100,000 fine if convicted on all counts. (Don Kelsen, Los Angeles Times)

By [Louis Sahagun](#) [contact the reporter](#)

Norman Starks has collected Native American artifacts for decades despite objections by tribal leaders

An Inyo County man has been indicted on federal charges he hunted for and took ancient Native American relics from public lands along the Eastern Sierra.

Norman Starks, 76, of Lone Pine has collected artifacts for decades despite objections by Native American leaders and state and federal authorities.



Norman Starks holds a Native American arrow left behind after federal authorities searched his home in July 2014. (Don Kelsen, Los Angeles Times)

Starks faces six counts of excavating and removing Native American beads, ceramic pots and stone tablets from areas including a prehistoric burial site in relic-rich Keeler Dunes, which is administered by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. If convicted on all counts, Starks faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$100,000 fine, U.S. Atty. Benjamin B. Wagner said.

In an interview Monday, Starks denied wrongdoing. "They haven't heard from me how I acquired that stuff they are saying I stole," he said. "They don't know where the hell it actually came from."

Gregory J. Haverstock, a BLM archaeologist, declined to comment except to say, "The federal government takes the protection of archaeological resources very seriously."

Dozens of federal agents led by the FBI raided Starks' century-old home eight months ago, seizing evidence including golf clubs that they believe he used to dig up artifacts he later stacked on tables, benches and on his front porch.

Starks said after the raid that hunting for artifacts was his birthright, noting that Eastern Sierra residents had collected relics in the region for more than a century. He shrugged off the idea that they were sacred.

"The Indians that made this stuff didn't think it was anything special," he said. "They used it and tossed it aside."



Norman Starks holds a collection of Native American artifacts. Dozens of federal agents led by the FBI raided Starks' century-old home eight months ago, seizing evidence including golf clubs that they believe he used to dig up artifacts he later stacked on tables, benches and on his front porch... (Don Kelsen, Los Angeles Times)

But Paiute-Shoshone tribal leaders say he destroyed priceless items placed by loved ones at graves for use in the afterlife. Kathy Jefferson Bancroft, tribal historic preservation officer for the Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Reservation, said, "When this case goes to trial, we'll be there in the courtroom to make sure everyone knows this is not a victimless crime."

An earlier federal case against Starks was dismissed in 2004 after the statute of limitations ran out. State charges against him ended with a hung jury in 2011.

Starks, however, agreed to a court order barring him from a 700-acre patch of Keeler Dunes for the rest of his life. He continued gathering relics on private property immediately north and south of the restricted area. Artifacts can be taken legally from private land.

Starks has said he was the victim of a conspiracy connected to a lawsuit he filed in 2010 accusing the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and the city of Los Angeles of taking control of century-old water rights that belong to his property.

The lawsuit was settled in December in favor of the utility. However, Matthew Emrick, an attorney representing Starks in that case, said Monday that the settlement included "an undisclosed amount of money paid to Starks by LADWP."

Direct Link: <http://www.latimes.com/science/la-me-starks-20150224-story.html>

Black-Indigenous Histories Beyond the Norm: Malcolm X and the Erasure of Indigeneity

[Kyle T. Mays](#)

2/24/15

Before every February, I get numerous requests to participate in programming for Black History Month. And I say no to none of them because I love doing them. I'll pause here

to share a brief piece of knowledge in case you didn't know. In 1926, Carter G. Woodson, the "Father of Black History," created "Negro History Week" in order to acknowledge and celebrate the accomplishments of black folks, who were not that far removed from enslavement.

Moving past Woodson, I think the assumption is that I can speak to a certain *type* of black-indigenous history^{3/4}centered on dispossession and enslavement from the 17th to the 19th centuries, and those that take place in the Northeastern and Southeastern United States, and in Indian Territory (present day Oklahoma). Or there's an assumption that the black-indigenous histories that exist today center on the Cherokee Freedmen (still a very important issue). However, black-indigenous histories are not bound by familiar historical events, tribal communities, geographies, and time periods. Nor are these histories romantic.

For example, we can discuss other interesting connections in the 20th century like Malcolm X, one of my favorite black heroes. Malcolm X was a staunch black activist, the epitome of mid-twentieth century black defiance and masculinity. He was, as the late actor Ossie Davis described, "Our own shining black prince." As I reflect on his life on the eve of his assassination, I can't help but think about a passage I recently read after doing my annual re-reading of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965). Malcolm's comment, at the level of discourse, both acknowledged that settler colonialism and simultaneously erased indigeneity.

Malcolm commented on the predicament of Indigenous people in the United States, correctly stating, "Our nation was born in genocide when it embraced the doctrine that the original American, the Indian, was an inferior race."

He said, "We are perhaps the only nation which tried as a matter of national policy to wipe out its indigenous population. Moreover, we elevated that tragic experience into a noble crusade. Indeed, even today we have not permitted ourselves to reject or to feel remorse for this shameful episode. Our literature, our films, our drama, our folklore all exalt it. Our children are still taught to respect the violence which reduced a red-skinned people of an earlier culture into a few fragmented groups herded into impoverished reservations."

Malcolm's initial history is correct: the United States was born in settler colonialism and remains so. He was also spot on about the United States making the genocide of indigenous people part of a noble crusade, especially within the American cultural imagination. Hell, Malcolm couldn't have known that we'd still be fighting against that Washington team. The key point, though, is analyzing how Malcolm understood the development of U.S. settler colonial history.

His conception seems to be one in which indigenous people put up little resistance and were finally defeated, placed on impoverished reservations. The next question is to understand why. Speaking mostly—although not exclusively—to a black audience, I think Malcolm's point of emphasis was that if black people didn't stand up against "the

white man,” then they would be wiped out. (They had already killed the Indians, don’t think we can’t suffer a similar fate.) In other words, Malcolm uses indigenous history as a prop, a teaching tool for how not to end up. This passage erases indigeneity, to the point where I continue to hear black folks use such language to describe indigenous people. In fact, I heard a talk not long ago where a black scholar erroneously stated that all indigenous people were placed on reservations. I wonder where he heard that?

I used this brief example, not to deride Minister Malcolm X or black folks in general, but to make the point that there are many more episodes of black-indigenous history that have gone under examined. On a practical level, we (black and indigenous folks) should carefully analyze how we discuss each other—both past and present—in hopes of creating a political situation in which both #BlackLivesMatter and #NativeLivesMatter—equally.

Until then, we’ll continue to be haunted by the words of Carter G. Woodson, “One of the longest unwritten chapters in the history of the United States is that treating of the relations of the Negroes and the Indians.” I think it’s now time to change the game.

Kyle Mays is a Black/Saginaw Chippewa transdisciplinary scholar of urban history, Indigenous Studies, and Indigenous popular culture. He is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of History and American Indian and Indigenous Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. His dissertation, titled "Indigenous Detroit: Indigeneity, Modernity, and Gender and Racial Formation in a Modern American City, 1871-2000," examines the role of Indigenous people and indigeneity in the development of modern Detroit. You can follow him on Twitter [@mays_kyle](#).

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/02/24/black-indigenous-histories-beyond-norm-malcolm-x-and-erasure-indigeneity>

Recommendations Heard To Improve Education For Native American Students

February 25, 2015 1:21 PM

MINNEAPOLIS (WCCO) – Numbers released on Tuesday showed that Native American students in Minnesota have among the lowest graduation and highest dropout [rates](#) in the country.

The data showed that nearly [50 percent of the 20,000 Native American students in public schools fail to graduate high school on time](#). Now, tribes and state education officials are working to turn things around.

The Indian Education Working Group was at the Capitol Wednesday, asking lawmakers for more money and **resources** to research obstacles that Native American students face.

“We’re not going quick enough,” said Dennis Olson, of the Office of Indian Education. “And we’re not getting at the attack of the achievement gap like we absolutely need to, with urgency.”

One of the group’s recommendations included allocating \$7.5 million annually, in addition to \$4.5 million Gov. Mark Dayton has already proposed, to support all schools that enroll Native American students.

Tribal leaders said they are also concerned that the GED has become more challenging and are asking lawmakers to allow sovereign nations to choose other high school competency tests of their choice.

Additionally, they want boards of charter schools that operate within tribal communities to have more flexibility to make their own decisions.

The bottom line is: They want Native American children to be leaders in Minnesota education.

The senate education committee seemed open to the recommendations. Lawmakers plan to have another hearing before making any decisions.

Direct Link: <http://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2015/02/25/recommendations-heard-to-improve-education-for-native-american-students/>

Are upscale Native American inspired foods the next food trend? North Coast Nosh brings in hundreds who think it is.

By [Stephanie Fox](#), [TC Daily Planet](#)
February 25, 2015



Wild rice came in many forms

If fry bread tacos are the only Native American food you've heard about, you may be in for a surprise. A new movement, to take traditional and native ingredients – pre-colonization ingredients like potatoes, corn, dandelion, fish and buffalo – and move them upscale is taking root in Minnesota.

The North Coast Nosh, held at the Minnesota History Center on Feb. 19th, featured more than 20 regional food businesses, with food samples and chances to learn about the new take on an ancient style of food. Many Native American operations were represented, but all focused on traditionally inspired high quality local ingredients and healthy cooking.

Chef Sean Sherman, owner of Sioux Chef [catering](#), a featured host at North Coast Nosh, was handing out samples of a mixed bean stew with maple braised turkey legs, wild rice and micro amaranth greens.

Sherman has been on a mission to educate people on cooking and eating haute native dishes since 2011, giving talks and holding pop-up restaurant events. At the most recent, held at the Astor, he served elegant versions of rabbit, duck, squash, and smoked whitefish, using all local ingredients.

"I've been working in fine dining for years, so building composed plates is something I do," he said. "It's an expression of art."

Sherman started cooking at resorts near his Black Hills reservation home when he was 13-years old, working his way up to chef and managing to pick up a business degree in the meantime.

Sherman has focused on foods of the Dakota and Ojibwe tribes, and although he ate [regional native food](#) while growing up, he knew there was a lot more to learn if he wanted to bring the cuisine from the reservation to the world.

"There wasn't a lot of Native American food out there in restaurants," he said. "I went searching, talking to elders, figuring out the foundation of these food systems. I learned about natural ways of preservation and cooking techniques and what people were storing away for the winter."

"The food is simple. It's a minimal style of cooking, staying true to local food," he said. "The food's clean." Sherman thinks that many people are ready to try traditional cuisine. "Rabbit braised with cedar and maple, for example, is very comfortable for most people. It's just the flavors of Minnesota with a Native American technique."

Later this year, Chef Sherman, his co-chef Christine Werner, Lenny Russo of [Heartland Restaurant](#) and former MN Secretary of State Mark Richie hope to travel to the 2015 Milan World's Fair to booster Minnesota and to give demonstrations of American indigenous foods as part of the Fair's "Feeding the Planet" theme. [The World Fair](#) is expected to attract 29 million visitors from May through October. The two Sioux Chefs

will take over a restaurant at the Fair for a week, then leaving to travel Europe, including Norway and Iceland to spread the word.

Sherman is already traveling the state, doing educational outreach with youth and adults, especially with Native American Communities.

The lines were long at the sample tables, including the Tanka Fund table, where you could taste their exclusive turkey/buffalo/cranberry jerky and sign up to win a hand-painted Lakota buffalo hide. Tanka Fund's national campaign hopes to return the buffalo to the native prairie ecosystem. [Red Lake Nation Fishery](#) account manager Robert Blake held out a tray of delicious samples of smoked whitefish and salmon spreads. "Have a nosh," he said.

The Hungry Turtle Farmers Cooperative, located in nearby Wisconsin, is a group of small organic farmers, working to create a local sustainable local food system.

Local restaurants joined in the food celebration. Harriet Brasserie gave away a multi-cultural mini taco with duck confit, tomatillo sauce, crème fraîche and Mexican cheese. Loring Park restaurant The Third Bird showed off their white corn porridge with puffed wild rice and Common Roots Catering featured sweet potato canapés.

Chefs Dawn Drouillard and Eden Fitzgerald, owners of Fabulous Catering, served tiny bison and beef juicy lucys stuffed with cheese and edible flowers and served on wild rice buns. The Birchwood Café gave away samples of their own granola recipe topped with Kalona yoghurt and house-made Wisconsin cranberry jam.

Wild rice was everywhere, from cereals and pancake mixes to cake made with wild rice flour to wild rice pasta. So were maple products including syrup and maple sugar candy.

Chef Sherman is banking that foods like these will be part of the new healthy-eating trend. He is hoping to spread the gospel of appetizing, healthy food to Native American populations. But, he wants to attract the general population of food adventurers. He is planning on opening a fine dining restaurant late in 2015 serving foods inspired by traditional Native recipes. He's also working with Little Earth and the Minneapolis American Indian Center to introduce a food truck featuring local native foods, ready to hit the road by this summer. "Food is the focus," he said. "It's part of the future of our culture."

Direct Link: <http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/news/2015/02/25/are-upscale-native-american-inspired-foods-next-food-trend-north-coast-nosh-brings-h>

Tonya Gonnella Frichner, Advocate for Indigenous Peoples, Dies at 67

By [SAM ROBERTS](#) FEB. 24, 2015

Photo



Tonya Gonnella Frichner envisioned a global alliance of America's hundreds of Indian tribes and indigenous people worldwide. Credit Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples Photo Archives

Tonya Gonnella Frichner, a lawyer and professor from upstate New York who became a global voice for Native Americans in forging common ground with the world's indigenous peoples, died on Feb. 14 at her home in Union City, N.J. She was 67.

Her husband, Herbert Frichner, said the cause was breast cancer.

The niece of a chief of the [Onondaga Nation](#) of the Iroquois Confederacy, Ms. Frichner founded the [American Indian Law Alliance](#) and served as North American regional representative to the [United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues](#).

"Indigenous peoples all speak many different languages, but in our meetings, we are speaking one language," Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations secretary general, quoted her saying in September. "Our relationship to Mother Earth is identical."

Ms. Frichner's agenda included opposition to the Atlanta Braves fans' celebratory tomahawk chop and to the natural gas drilling technology known as hydrofracking, which she said would have a disproportionate environmental effect on Native Americans and other minority groups.

Because she was not married to a member of the tribe, she did not live on the Onondaga reservation near Syracuse. But she worked closely with its leaders and with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (once known as the Iroquois Confederacy) and the Lakota

Nation, and envisioned a global alliance of America's hundreds of Indian tribes and indigenous people worldwide.

"The first thing indigenous peoples on the planet share is the experience of having been invaded by those who have treated us without compassion because they have considered us less than human, or not human," Ms. Frichner said in a [statement](#) announcing a [United Nations report](#) in 2010.

"Dehumanization," she continued, "has led to the second thing we as indigenous peoples share in common: being treated on the basis of the belief that those who have invaded our territories have a right of lordship or dominance over our existence as indigenous nations and peoples and, therefore, illegitimately claim the right to take, grant away and dispose of our lands, territories and resources bequeathed to us by our ancestors, without our permission and consent."

Ms. Frichner was born Tonya Keith Gonnella in Syracuse on Sept. 19, 1947. Her father, Henry, was an Italian-American construction worker. Her mother, the former Maxine Nolan, served on the school board, where, as an Onondaga, she sought to promote a Native American curriculum.

Ms. Frichner earned her undergraduate degree from St. John's University and graduated from the City University of New York School of Law.

She later taught American Indian history and law, anthropology and human rights at City and Hunter Colleges of the City University of New York, as well as at Manhattanville College and New York University.

In addition to her husband, whom she married in 1978, she is survived by a son, Jason; her sisters, Kimberly Gonnella, Nannette Gonnella and Jacquelyn Thomas; and her brothers, Henry Gonnella Jr., Michael Gonnella, Thomas Gonnella and Christopher Gonnella.

Mr. Frichner attributed his wife's commitment to the Indian cause to the Onondaga's matriarchal society. "She always had a strong feeling for her people because of her mother," Mr. Frichner said. "I met her when she was 24, and she had it then."

Correction: February 25, 2015

An earlier version of this obituary misstated the date Ms. Frichner died. It was Feb. 14, not Feb. 12.

Direct Link: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/25/us/tonya-gonnella-frichner-advocate-for-indigenous-peoples-dies-at-67.html? r=0>

Seattle's Famous Native American Murals Vandalized; Artist Leads Cleanup

[ICTMN Staff](#)

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Over the weekend, the well-known murals at the Wilson-Pacific school in Seattle were vandalized—but today, they were restored by the artist who created them.

Andrew Morrison, whose wall of massive portraits of Geronimo, Sitting Bull, Chief Joseph and Chief Seattle is a landmark in North Seattle, led a cleanup crew that removed the white latex paint that had been splattered across the images. Since the news of the vandalization broke, on Monday, Morrison has said he knows who did it. "He was stupid enough to write his own name," [Morrison told the Seattle Times](#), explaining that the graffiti spells out DAPKILO—"DAP" being the name of a graffiti crew and "KILO" an artist's handle.

The Wilson-Pacific school has been in the news for the past couple of years because of its murals as well as its uncertain future. The current situation, [as reported by ICTMN earlier this month](#), is that the school will be demolished (despite having officially been designated a Seattle landmark last year), but the murals will be saved.

Morrison took a break from the cleanup operation to share his thoughts on the incident with ICTMN.

What was your reaction when you learned of the vandalism?

My reaction was immediate attention of the safety of our children and our Native American heart and Native American spirit. I knew this was a hate crime rooted in primitive ignorance and I knew I have to be the more compassionate warrior in this holy war.



It could have been worse: Muralist Morrison said that the latex-based paint would not be difficult to remove. Photo courtesy Andrew Morrison.

How has the Native community reacted?

The Native community is outraged and broken hearted. The community loves these murals as their own, and seeing this desecration of something we fought so hard to save is ripping through our spirits like a hurricane. Bad medicine has manifested, and this is an act that is confronting tribal members to their face. This act of cowardice is challenging our stamina, patience, and way of life.

What do you think—was this a random act of vandalism or does it have some meaning?

This is a direct attack on what we as Native Americans have stood against. Which is freedom, red roads, and forgiveness. This act is trying to provoke confrontation and war. This act is trying to provoke violence.

Who was involved in today's restoration operation?

I spearheaded the recovery with the help of my father and other community members who volunteered their time and contributions. All of this immediate work is coming out of my pocket and my mission of giving and mission of compassion continues in the face of an enemy hiding behind lies. We have done our best to repair the images of our great warrior chiefs. The spirits of Sitting Bull, Geronimo, Chief Joseph, and Chief Seattle were watching.



Using brushes and a high-pressure hose, the cleanup crew restored the iconic images to their original state. Photo courtesy Andrew Morrison.

Does this affect the plans to save the murals?

No, and we have deleted this hate crime as fast as it attempted to manifest. Good spirits win.

Do you think the vandalism is related to the announcement that the school will be demolished?

This is related to the saving of the murals, this is related to the construction and preservation of the murals, and this was a weak strategic planned attack aimed to disrupt a fluid cooperative effort between all those who love our Native American murals. This weak strategic act of cowardice is being brought to the light and I am praying for the softening of hearts right now.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/02/25/seattles-famous-native-american-murals-vandalized-artist-leads-cleanup-159380>